





*Frédéric Chamier.*





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# COUNT KÖNIGSMARK:

An Historical Romance.

BY

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"THE LIFE OF A SAILOR," "BEN BRACE," "JACK ADAMS,"  
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IN THREE VOLUMES

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## COUNT KÖNIGSMARK.

## CHAPTER I.

THE sentence, as far as regarded the principals, gave great satisfaction ; but in reference to the accessory, there could but be one opinion, —that of considerable partiality. The Monmouth party clung to the hope that the confession of the convicts, during the short interval allowed between the trial and the execution, might still strongly implicate Königsmark, and leave him, although acquitted, under the ban of suspicion. Borasky being tied up by the executioner, as was then the custom when sentence of death was to be pronounced, said, “ he prayed God to have mercy upon him ! ”

Vratz, with unflinching nerve, only remarked, that "he heard he was condemned, but that he was never rightly examined or fairly tried." And Stern remarked, "that he did it for the Captain's sake, and went as a second to him." The judge's address had no reference to Konigsmark, and sentence of death was passed in the usual manner, and on the 10th of March they were executed.

Very strenuously had Dr. Horneck and Dr. Burnett endeavoured, by all the terrors of religion, to extract from Vratz anything that could implicate the Count; and when Stern made a confession, and declared that he had a letter from Konigsmark, asking him to murder Mr. Thynne, Vratz coolly interposed, and told the reverend divines, that theirs was a curious religion which did not believe in auricular confession, and yet wished to force words of untruth, to suit their own purposes, from the men who feared to die. "As for myself," he continued, "I don't value dying of a rush, and I feel convinced God will deal with me *like a gentleman*."

Great excitement was in London on the 10th of March. "Gibbets," says the *Domestic Intel-*

*ligence* newspaper of the 9th, “ are prepared on the spot where the murder was committed, and many hundred standings taken up by persons of quality and others.”

Borasky, being of the commonest herd, and being besides very ungainly in his person and manners, was singled from the other two, to be hung in chains; and after the execution, the body was fixed up at the eastern extremity of the metropolis, on the wayside between Mile-end and Bow. Stern suddenly turned from an assassin into a saint and enthusiast, breathing nothing but heavenly raptures, and he left behind him twenty-five paragraphs or sections of mixed warning and denouncement,\* for the benefit of the world, if the world ever consented to notice them. They would have died—indeed, were dead—but the elegant and persevering author of the *English Causes Célébrés* has resuscitated them.

Vratz was a person who occupied much of the public curiosity—his cool, unflinching character had been widely spread, and many, who had seen his unwavering countenance when the sentence of death was passed, were anxious

\* *English Causes Célébrés.*

to witness his execution, to see, in that trying hour, if fear could not blanch his cheek, or shake the firmness of his step—but, strange as it was, Vratz was the only unconcerned person in the affair.

Before his tormenters, as he called the divines who endeavoured to obtain a confession, had quite exhausted their eloquence in divinity and their lawyer-like power of cross-examination, Vratz requested, if quite convenient to the Count, that he would honour him with a visit. Konigsmark, who affected the greatest effrontery, and whose abode was publicly known, instantly obeyed the summons.

On entering the condemned cell, the heart of the Count seemed to increase its rapid beating; he had never contemplated his old servant chained in a dark, low, miserable hole, tasting in life more than half the horrors of death; but his eyes quickly comprehended Vratz's signal to keep a guarded silence. At this interview the gaoler was present, as was a Swedish interpreter, dressed as an assistant, in order, if possible, to glean sufficient to fix the crime on the Count. Vratz asked that these men might retire; but the two clergymen, who



were unceasing in their attendance on the condemned men, said that was impossible.

“At any rate,” said Vratz, carelessly, “I can dispense with your holy presence, good gentlemen; my soul you may fancy in your keeping, but my worldly secrets are in my own. I would have you retire, reverend clergymen, you must needs be fatigued with your long and fruitless attendance.”

Being now only in the company of the gaoler and his attendant, Vratz was still on his guard, and began, in a solemn tone of voice, to implore the Count’s forgiveness for having acted in this murder without the Count’s knowledge, and to assure him that he did it in revenge for the abuse Thynne had lavished upon him. “You hear this?” said Vratz, suddenly, to the gaoler’s assistant, who, off his guard, replied, in Swedish, “I do.”

“The world for me, good Count, is nearly over,” said Vratz; “and, young as I am, I have seen much of it, and were it not that my execution will deprive you of a faithful follower, and her, the only being I ever loved, of a true and faithful heart, I could see the curtain drop, and the performance finish without

a sigh. See what miserable creatures we are ! Why, at this nearly my last hour, they place a spy upon my words—that poor fellow, who is paid for his treachery, is half a Swede—and thus, what I would have buried here, must needs go forth to the world. Firstly, have I your pardon for having done this deed ?”

Konigsmark, afraid to answer, took Vratz by the hand, and gave him a pressure of acknowledgment for his devotedness.

“It is well,” said Vratz ; “in that hand, my noble master, I understand my forgiveness. Now, I ask you, if, in the course of my long service upon you, I have ever done that which was according to your desire, saving in this last act—if, when attacked, I placed my body before yours to receive the wound—if, in all trials and in dangers, I have done my duty ? Will you grant me one favour ?”

Konigsmark answered, “that at the peril of his life, which now he hardly valued, since an attempt had been made upon his character, he would fulfil, to the uttermost letter, the wishes of his faithful and valued friend.”

“It is here,” said Vratz, taking from his bosom a long lock of hair, which, when he



restored Isabella to liberty, she had granted him. "Tell her, that in life this lock never deserted me; that I wore it while my heart was warm, and that she will receive it when that heart has ceased to beat; but tell her, that when the crowd, eager for the excitement of an execution, may hoot me on the scaffold, my thoughts will be of her, my memory the record of her beauty. I was in hopes to have risen in the French service in the wars, and to have become worthy of her hand; but I know one of her high blood—for she was no peasant girl—could only be won by the brave and the generous. I place her under your care, Count, and my curses, ay, the curses of a dying man, await upon him who dares to violate her honour, or cause the tear of repentance and sorrow to sully her beautiful face. You tremble, Count!"

"It is the chill of this lonely place, and the knowledge of the hardship of your condemnation."

"Think not of me—death cannot unman me. I have too often faced him to fear him. I knew that one day or another he must triumph, and what signifies it if it be to-day or to-

morrow, or ten years hence? We are mere worms, trod and trampled on, and death spares neither the king nor the peasant. But, once again, let me speak of the only object of my heart. When I was at Naples, I learnt much from that devil to whom I was desired to speak; he was one of the banditti who stole a girl about that time, and in his joyous minutes he mentioned the scene that girl related at Malta. Protect her, Count, and if a dying man's prayer be registered in heaven, your name shall be there; but curses, ten thousand curses, and the death the least suspected and most sudden, fall upon him who violates her chastity, or degrades her mind; and if my soul can hover over the wretch who dares to do so great a sin, his sleep shall never be sound! Ah! by this interruption I know your time is expired—these lips will soon be sealed in death;" and approaching close to Konigsmark's ear, he murmured, "and no power on earth—no, not even the stirring devil of revenge, if revenge I could wish against my kindest master, shall ever betray our secret. You see, gentlemen," he said, to the sheriff, who came in, "that I can make my life shorter,

by quickening the passage of each moment in the excitement of my subject. It was but a short quarter of an hour after all. Farewell, good Count, I shall never see you again, unless to-morrow you witness my death ; remember what I have said—to you I entrust her. The ruffians who asked if I had goods and chattels, lands and tenements, would have seized them on my conviction, and would have left me nothing but the words of affection which to the last I reserve for her, and my curses of vengeance after death upon her destroyer. Once more, Count, let me feel your hand—by my soul, it is more cold and clammy than the convicted felon's ! Give this kiss to her, and tell her, in the last moment of my life, I thought of her as her protector, and could have stabbed the man who dared to injure her. Again—again, farewell ! if in this life I have been of service to you, remember me kindly, and guard and protect her. This is my last request. Good bye !”

Konigsmark, having somewhat recovered himself, was about to speak, when Vratz placed his finger on the Count's lip, and said, “ Good master, you are too agitated to talk. Every

word would be weighed by these prison spies, and holy seekers of confessions." Vratz beckoned him away, and Konigsmark left the cell.

"I crave your pardon, good Mr. Sheriff," said Vratz, with wonderful self-possession, "if, in taking leave of my late master, I may have omitted to notice you."

"In the same mood as ever, Captain, I perceive," said the Sheriff. "I did not come to interrupt your last moments with one you have so faithfully served; but that I was sent by a woman, whose face I have never seen, and who bears an order for immediate admission from the secretary of state."

"What!" replied Vratz, "do they wish to show the lion in his cage? Is a convicted murderer so fascinating that women come to look upon him? I am ready, Mr. Sheriff,—because I cannot avert it. There is but one woman I would see, and she is far—far away."

The Sheriff retired, and in a few minutes returned, leading in a figure in deep mourning, with a thick black veil. To her the Sheriff bowed lowly, and added, "A quarter of an hour is the usual time, but I am desired to ex-

tend it at your discretion." He then beckoned to the two gaolers, and, leaving a small hand-bell, remarked, "The door will be fastened; but when you are anxious to be released, sound this, and the door will be instantly opened." The heavy bolts were heard to move, and Vratz and the lady remained alone. For a minute or two neither spoke; but Vratz soon broke silence. "Fair creature," he began, "who can thus compassionate the unfortunate, and who, with all charity of purpose, dares to visit a murderer, in what manner can I be useful to you?—for I see you have something to ask, and your sex never applied either to Konigsmark or Vratz in vain." A slight shudder was visible in the female. "Fear not," said Vratz, "the man who is to die to-morrow will scarcely insult one of your sex to-day. Let me remove that veil, for I am one who never liked a mask."

The veil was removed, and, in all the loveliness of youth and beauty, the elegant Donna Maria was visible.

"By my faith," said Vratz, "I would not have you for my confessor for all France,—no one could keep his own secret, and be wise. I



would have you be brief, good lady. The sand of life is running fast through my glass, and nobody will turn it to-morrow."

"You know the Count Konigsmark?" said Donna Maria.

"I do, and have done for years ;—from the time he went mad upon witches until this moment."

"Have you ever left him during that time?"

"Yes! he was forced to fly from Malta, to protect a beautiful creature from insult, and from being compelled into a marriage adverse to her wishes. He left her at Messina whilst he travelled on into Spain."

"Can you describe her?"

"As faithfully as ever limner drew the features of the maid he most adored. She was thus." And Vratz described Isabella.

"'Tis so!" said Donna Maria, in a fluttering voice; "it is the same. Can you tell me,—and not feel angry at my impertinence, for weaning you from graver thoughts to satisfy a woman's curiosity,—where is she now?"

"First, fair lady, let me tell you that the subject is far more agreeable to me than the talk of those parsons, who are always repeating



what I know well enough—a prayer, and the comfortable information that I am to be hanged to-morrow. The lady in question is now at Naples ; and a purer, lovelier, more chaste, and more innocent woman breathes not this life.”

“ Then we speak not of the same woman,” said Donna Maria.

“ How ?” said Vratz, much excited.

“ Because the one to whom I advert lived with him in Spain,—sometimes dressed as a boy, oftentimes in the dress more befitting a woman.”

“ In Spain !” said Vratz, drawing his breath quickly ; “ then, where is she now ?”

“ At Naples. She was embarked at Barcelona, and left by the Count suddenly.”

“ Did you ever see her ?”

“ Often—often—too often !”

“ In her speech did she slightly lisp ?”

“ She did.”

“ And her hair and eyes ?”

“ Black as my own.”

“ And her country ?”

“ Italian.”

“ Now, sound that bell,” said Vratz, “ and

let me hasten my execution, for from this moment no secret is safe within my lips ; and I would not die like a cur, snapping where I could not bite. Did she sing ?”

“ Sweetly—sweetly ! some songs which she had learnt in Greece, when she was detained after shipwreck.”

“ Enough, for the love of Heaven !” said Vratz, as he approached his visitor. “ Say not another word—you have done more than the executioner could do,—you have killed my heart. Ah ! this is fearful vengeance of my crime to hear of this. Oh, that I had died this morning, and never clasped the cold clamminess of his hand, or felt the kiss of his hot lips ! I have a favour to ask you.—Is it within your power to give me some strong medicine which would make me sleep until to-morrow. I do not want to poison myself,—that is a coward’s act, but I would cease from this instant to have memory.”

“ Alas ! I cannot assist you, poor soul ; and much I grieve that my visit here should so have disturbed your last minutes. I wished only to discover if Isabella——”

“ Her name, by all that is holy and wonder-

ful! Then may curses, which he has heard, light upon him,—for this did he suddenly embark and leave me to follow to Naples! What! not one soul left in this world to regret Isabella, his companion? Ah! well I know his disposition,—and I, deceived, cajoled, to forward his views that he might become rich and great! I thought I heard a footstep near the door. Be not frightened at my impetuosity,—dying men have the privilege of being eccentric. What can I answer you in order to be left alone, and thank God that I have no one to regret?”

“My cause for coming thus to you was to ascertain if she was living with him now.”

“That I can answer positively, for had she been, he had died before Mr. Thynne was murdered. A gleam of hope still comes to my despairing eyes!—did she—did *she* love *him*?”

“Ay, more than herself,—for when the Count must have met his death from a bull, she rushed in and plunged her dagger to its heart.”

Vratz sat down. That last blow had overcome the giant of courage. He moved his heavy chains about, his eyes were fixed upon the

floor, nor did the warning bell arouse him. Donna Maria thanked one who never heeded the words, and, drawing her thick veil over her face, left the prison.

The manner of Vratz being so different from his former mood, some apprehension of poison occurred to the gaolers. They held their lights close to him,—they raised his head,—he never spoke; but with a vacant stare allowed them to move him as they chose. The clergymen came, for it was now growing late, but they prated to the pavement,—even the food remained untouched; and not a person, whose business it is to perplex and annoy the criminal, could gain from him one answer. He threw himself upon the miserable bed, and, holding his hands close over his eyes, never moved.

At that bedside knelt two holy and devout men, who, sincere in their prayer, implored forgiveness for him who cared not to implore it himself. By turns they read passages in the holy book, and again and again implored the murderer to join in their prayers:—it was all in vain. At eleven o'clock they retired, and Vratz and his gaolers were alone.



“At what time am I to be hung to-morrow?” said Vratz, with his usual coolness.

“About eleven, young man, you will be turned off.”

“And how and where is this last scene to be?”

“On the spot where the crime was committed. You will be taken there in a cart, and will find plenty of company.”

“If I wished to speak to one from the scaffold should I be allowed?”

“Lord love you, yes! They never minds what people say who are going to be hanged; but if it’s a wet morning you can’t expect ’em to be very attentive. It’s not at all painful, if Jack Ketch places the rope right, and you keep your neck steady.”

“Thank you,” said Vratz, “for the information; and now, having conquered myself, I will allow nature to conquer me, and go to sleep. Good night!”

“Good night,” said the gaoler, leaning back; “those gentlemen will come early to give you consolation.”

“Good night—good night!” And marvellous it was that in about five minutes the criminal

was fast asleep. He slept soundly, as those in good health ; and it was late on the following morning before he awoke. He begged he might be carefully shaved, and was more particular in his dress than usual. About nine o'clock the Sheriff informed him his hour was come.

“ I would,” said Vratz, “ it had been earlier. May I write one last word ?”

“ It will but delay you a moment,” replied the Sheriff, who appeared to think this was but an attempt to prolong a miserable existence, and grasp at another short minute of life. Vratz read his thoughts, and smiled :—“ You are mistaken, I seek not to prolong life,—but I would have these words my last. I therefore wish to write them, to hand them to you, or the executioner, before, as my companion said last night, I am ‘ turned off.’”

The paper was brought, and Vratz hastily, but in a firm hand, wrote two lines. He sealed them carefully, and turning round, said, “ I am ready ; but I have one request which, perhaps, you, sir, will grant me.”

“ If in my power to accede to it, you need not fear a refusal.”

“ It is not so difficult ; only this,—that a



second before I am executed, you take this paper from my hand, and give it yourself to the Count Konigsmark."

"I will pledge my honour," said the Sheriff, "to the obedience of your wish."

"Then I need not say, as your monarch said to the bishop, *Remember?*"

"My honour is pledged, Captain, and I shall remember *that*."

## CHAPTER II.

THE morning happened to be fine, and Vratz carelessly remarked, as his hands were pinioned, and as he walked towards the cart, "that he should have a large company." The sight of his coffin and the executioner did not in the least alter his countenance, and he sat down upon that which was shortly to contain his inanimate body, with all the indifference possible.

The crowd saluted him with one tremendous hiss of execration, at which he smiled; but that soon subsided when the multitude witnessed the undaunted manner in which he was prepared to meet his fate; the scorn turned to sympathy, alike indifferent to the convict.

The clergyman read diligently the dreadful

denunciation on impenitent sinners. Even the executioner knelt, but Vratz sat quietly on the coffin, his eyes seeming to penetrate the crowd in search of some one man. He held the small letter tightly in his hand, and it was evident that his mind was far away from the scene. The jolting of the cart seemed to require some exertion on the criminal's part, and this alone seemed to remind him that he was in an uneasy carriage.

The streets were lined with people, all anxious to see a man hanged; and strange it is, that the frequency of executions never gratified this morbid feeling of curiosity; but human nature is the same everywhere. The infliction of the highest penalty of the law is an attractive tragedy; and the front windows and raised platforms are better speculations than boxes for an opera, even when majesty appears.

Men have been known to go miles to fetch a bottle of water from a stagnant pond, because a woman had been drowned in it; and a knife which has inflicted murder is retained as a wonderful curiosity. The pickpockets are the only people indifferent to the scene. But with the old and young, the peer and the

peasant, the rich and the poor, an execution commands a vast congregation ; what was intended to thrill the mind with horror, has lost its effect. No one looks at the priests in their holy avocation, or joins in their prayers. The executioner is a much stronger object of admiration to those who are likely to be acquainted with him personally before long ; and every twitch of the condemned man's countenance, every motion of his body, and every wink of his eye, is watched with the intensity of curiosity and alarm, that a child fascinated by a rattlesnake might be supposed to bestow on its probable destroyer. Strange, most strange indeed, in a highly civilized nation, are the delight experienced, the excitement gratified, at the unnatural death of a fellow creature. The crime for which he suffers makes the flesh creep, and blanches the cheek of beauty. The sight of an equally hideous death is anticipated as a scene of recreation ; and people stand for hours, in all the inclemency of the season, not to lose so fascinating and so exciting a spectacle.

Had the government ordered a dozen live tigers and panthers to be harnessed to the

king's carriage, provided they were not to be allowed to eat the king afterwards, not a twentieth part of the people would have been drawn to the curious scene, who honoured Vratz with their attendance at his execution. The only calm man, the only one who did not seem animated by hope, or depressed by fear, was Vratz ; and so great was his unconcern, that it is mentioned thus :—"The Captain," said Sir John Reresby, "died without any the least symptoms of fear, or offering at the least glance of reflection on Count Konigsmark ; and, seeing me in my coach, as he passed by in the cart, he made a bow to me with the most steady countenance, as he did to several of the spectators before he was turned off. In short, his whole carriage, from the first moment he was apprehended to the last that he resigned his breath, savoured much of gallantry, but not at all of religion."

Borasky and Stern occupied very little of the public attention ; they were truly penitent and meek. Morbid sensibility requires something more stimulating than propriety, hence every word of Vratz's was retained. Stern and Borasky were eager to read to the last,



Dilheren's "Way to Happiness," in High Dutch, and sung together three times the 51st Psalm.

Doctor Horneck, having prepared the minds of the two others for the dreadful scene, now turned his attention to Vratz ; but finding him quite unconcerned,\* "hinted, though gently enough, a reference to hell fire."—"I fear no hell," was the short reply.

"I answered," continued the Doctor, "possibly he might believe none, or if he did, it might be a very easy one of his own making."

He answered, "he was not such a fool as to believe that souls could fry in material fire, or be roasted as meat on a great hearth, or in a kitchen."

The cart at last drew up under the gibbets, and a loud roar of human monsters again assailed, in execrations fierce and deep, the last moments of these men. Borasky and Stern both shuddered at their approaching end ; but Vratz fixed his eyes on the Duke of Monmouth, after having in vain sought for Count Konigsmark. The assembly was so enormous that nothing but a pre-eminence of situation, like that occu-

\* *Causes Célèbres.*

pied by the Duke, could direct the eye to any one object ; it was a multitudinous sea of heads, moved backwards and forwards according to the variations of the pressure, and all with their eyes fixed on only one of the criminals. Thus does Dr. Burnet describe Vratz's last minutes : " This singular desperado, in truth, completely puzzled and nonplussed the two worthy divines. It is certain, that never man died with more resolution, and less signs of fear, or the least disorder. His carriage in the cart, both as he was led along, and at the place of execution, was astonishing ; he was not only undaunted, but looked cheerful, and smiled often. When the rope was put about his neck, he did not change colour or tremble, his legs were firm under him. He looked often about on those that stood in balconies and windows, and seemed to fix his eyes on some persons. Three or four times he smiled. He would not cover his face as the rest did ; but continued in that state, often looking up to heaven with a cheerful countenance, and a little motion of the hands."

This worthy chronicler of last actions, never noticed the stream of tears which coursed down

the cheeks of the two penitent men, and dropped like rain from beneath the cap which had shut out the world and its sorrows from them for ever. The Sheriff advanced, and Vratz, who that moment had caught a glimpse of him for whom he had sacrificed "state, station, heaven, mankind, his own esteem," gave the note, and with his eyes directed the look of the Sheriff, and said, "*There !*"

The preliminaries were all over. The cart was driven away, and three of our principal characters were at once removed from the scene. And yet, after death, Vratz was destined to be the means of handing another man's name down to posterity—and in this quotation is proved what good society *honoured* his execution.

"I went," says Evelyn, "to see the corpse of Vratz. The King permitted that his body should be transported to his own country; it being the first which was embalmed by a particular art, invented by one William Russell, a coffin-maker, which preserved the body without disbowelling, or, to appearance, using any bituminous matter. The flesh was florid, soft, and full, as if the person were only sleep-

ing. He had now been dead fifteen days, and lay exposed in a very rich coffin lined with lead, too magnificent for so daring and horrid a murderer." Thus it happened, that the name of the inventor of this art was preserved from the curiosity of Evelyn, who, like the rest of society, flocked to see a murderer lying in state. Borasky, as has been mentioned, was exhibited at another place ; but as to Stern, by far the most penitent and best behaved of the whole, no mention is made of him after the last exhibition.

It was with feelings of intense interest that Konigsmark watched the execution, and cursed each moment's delay. He knew that few men, like to die with a foul falsehood on their lips to the very last ; and well he knew, from the interest taken by the Monmouth party, both at the trial and execution, that they would try to extract some words which might more directly implicate him, or fix a fouler stain upon his character. He saw Vratz direct the Sheriff's eyes, and he slunk behind a lovely female, who witnessed this horrid scene from her balcony.

It is the fashion to wonder how Roman women could attend a gladiatorial exhibition,

and, by reversing the thumb, decree a murder. There still was something exciting in the desperate effort of each gladiator. There was the "din, the glorious clang of arms," to rouse the spirit, and to silence the feelings; but in so vulgar and coarse a sight as gibbeting a murderer, there can be found no excuse for those of the softer sex, who go to gloat over the last struggles of a desperate and despicable criminal.



## CHAPTER III.

“COME in, fair lady ; heed not the exterior of the house, or the idle vermin who frequent it ; you will be well received by José Vergani and his wife, and never want a protector whilst Felipo Benvenuto lives.”

“I thank you much,” replied Isabella. “I am weary with my voyage, and would repose myself for a time.”

“This is the lady, José,” said Benvenuto, as he presented his beautiful charge.

“And, by my faith,” replied Vergani, eyeing her with his penetrating glance, “one much favoured in appearance. Pass this way, fair lady ; my wife will make you as comfortable as our circumstances permit.”

The wife of Vergani was a woman forty

years of age. In Italy, time leaves powerful marks after thirty, but even at this advanced stage had not effaced the traces of a beauty once the pride and the ornament of Naples. Laura, in her youth, had been admired by many—stilettoes had drawn blood and caused death on her account—and she remembered those proud years with all the fondness with which women cling to the last declining charm. Even now, when grown robust and out of all symmetry—when the slender waist and swelling form which marked the ripening girl were no longer imaginable—Laura coquetted with her glass, and ever found favour in her own sight. The appearance of Isabella awakened all the recollections of the past, and she eyed her with envy.

“Be seated, poor creature!” she began. “Vergani has told me you have come across the sea from Spain; and although, when recovered, you may look somewhat better, yet now you look very haggard and somewhat indisposed.”

Isabella, like a true woman, felt annoyed. It was the first time (so constant is flattery to a pretty woman’s ear) that she had ever been

told she could look ill. "I am, indeed, much fatigued," she replied: and Laura, during that short answer, had seen the wonderful whiteness of her teeth.

"Some cordial will restore you, my dear," said Laura; "and Vergani will not make a long account for one so kindly introduced to him."

"I was in hopes, madam," replied Isabella, who had early conceived a deep disgust for her hostess, "that I could have found some small apartment to which I might have retired, and thus saved you the trouble and inconvenience of sheltering me. I fear I may incommode you much."

"There is a sofa in that room," said Laura, without noticing Isabella's speech; "you can rest there, and I will speak to José concerning you."

It was impossible for a woman who had roamed to distant countries with a man like Konigsmark, in all the splendour of affluence, not to feel depressed in spirits, as she looked round the room to which she had been invited. There was a bed, but such a one as no lady would court. Around the room, hung with-

out any regard to neatness, were various kinds of arms. On one side was a long fowling-piece swinging to a rusty nail, suspended by a leather belt which fitted Vergani's shoulders; near it dangled a pair of most uncourteous pistols, sustained by the guard of the triggers; near these a smaller one was visible, whilst a thirsty stiletto, rusted in most unseemly neglect, was nailed by the side of a rapier; the former had a bright and sharp point, as if *that* had not been neglected, and the sword was so new, and of so good a manufacture, that it looked a foreigner amongst the dirty natives. In one corner were four or five telescopes, varying in power, and near them was a lamp of good size, with a red glass: it had for its companion two or three flags, rolled up on sticks; and this motley group of articles was surmounted by a strange kind of invention for letting off false fires, whilst some fireworks, called blue lights, stood in rows on a small shelf beneath. These were all useful at times to carry on Vergani's occupation. Here and there, one or two rather coarse prints were pinned against the wall; and a crucifix, which was placed between two of the most objectionable, proved that supersti-



tion still held some sway over the desperate heart of the possessor. The creakety sofa creaked with the unusual weight; but scarcely had Isabella reclined on the pillow, over which—not for fear of injuring it—she had spread a handkerchief, than Laura appeared with a small flask covered with straw, a glass, and some cool inviting water.

“There, my dear,” she said, with her most winning and her falsest smile; “in this warm weather you will find these refreshing. This is a small innocent wine—sweet—such as ladies love, and this is iced. Now go to sleep for an hour or so, and I will come when you awake.”

Isabella had noticed the change of countenance in Laura, and, with a fearful presentiment that her look boded her no good, she resolved, as soon as she was recovered from her fatigue, either to throw herself upon the honour or protection of Benvenuto, or seek an asylum elsewhere, and trust to Providence. Her future was not very bright in appearance; and, as she dreamily fancied the road on which she should pursue her course, thousands of fancies, as strange as they were unreal, flitted across her drowsy brain, until she fell asleep. The heaving



of her bosom proclaimed how dead she was to all around her.

Laura, whose step was light, having ascertained that she was in a heavy slumber, carefully closed the outer door, bolting it from the outside, and, entering a small room, reported to Benvenuto and Vergani that she was safe, and out of hearing.

"What signifies," said Vergani, who seemed much excited, "how we make the money, so long as we do make it?"

"It signifies much to me," replied the other. "I am a sailor, a man of few words, and my word is my bond. I pledged my honour."

"Oh! by my faith, that is exceeding rich!" interrupted Vergani. "The honour of the Captain of a coasting schooner!"

"A regular trader, by your leave," said Benvenuto, quickly; "coasters don't make straight courses from Barcelona to Naples."

"Well, coasters or traders, as you like, most honourable Captain. Pray, may I ask if your honour prevents your landing at José Vergani's sundry contraband articles? Pooh! pooh! man; we are not going to beat round the bush to overreach one another. Here's

the question:—The girl *was* under your charge, and *is* now under mine ; we have agreed as to the profits, and now comes the point—how to realize them. If I thought I could persuade the Count Meraviglia that this was his child, we might make a good thing of it hereafter,—for it would never do to hand her over to him like a bale of tobacco just arrived and just sold. But what do you think, Felipo, if we were to show her guardedly to the Prince Durazzo, or one or two of the Dorias, whose eyes would glisten at such a prize—eh ?”

“ I would not think of such a thing for a second,” replied the sailor. “ The girl shall come to no harm, if I can save her.”

“ That would puzzle you to hinder, if I were resolved. Here she is: at a whistle how many men could I muster, and how many corners would you turn towards the police, without encountering this ?”—and he gently drew from the red shawl worn round his waist a bright and sparkling stiletto. “ She is beautiful, and she may be a prize. Laura will soon manage to keep her quiet. Did she taste the wine ?”

“ Not a drop.”

“ Nor the water ?”

“Not a drop.”

“Well, well,” continued Vergani, “when she awakes she will take one or the other, and will sleep soundly enough not to look after apartments.”

“This is not dealing like a man, Vergani. If the poor creature is uncomfortable here, let me find her another lodging.”

“You should have thought of that before you brought her to this cage. Here, I promise the pretty prisoner is safe. What eyes she has! and what a beautiful mouth!—every feature is as accurate as a statue!—and, for figure, she reminds me of what Laura was a quarter of a century ago—eh, Laura?”

“I think little of your civility for that speech,” said Laura, colouring deeply.

“Don’t be jealous, old lady.”

“Old lady, forsooth! This is the old story, José; you love that creature, and you think to retain her by force; but I’ll be a match for you.”

“You have had one trip into Calabria, my dear,—do you want another? Let me find you daring to cross my wishes, and three days afterwards you would never find your way out

of the wood, even if you got out of the cave. Go; there is some one come in.—It will be some time yet, Felipo, before José Vergani can startle at the words of man or woman. Those who follow my trade can always revenge—may love—and can hate intensely. Take another glass; this wont set you to sleep, or, if it does, we can sleep together. They tell us in eastern countries that the cook tastes each dish in the presence of his sovereign, to assure him against poison. Now look at me.” And he drained a full glass.

“Good,” said the Captain; “I shall not be behind in that trade.” And he emptied his. “I see,” continued Benvenuto, “that I have let the staff out of my hand, and now must trust to your honour.”

“The government do that often, I can assure you,” replied Vergani, whose quick eyes seemed reading every thought of his open-hearted companion.

“Promise me you will make inquiries concerning the Count.”

“On my honour,” said Vergani, placing his hand on his heart, and giving a peculiar expression to his words.



“And our agreement stands good?”

“Of course it does. And now to other matters. Do you land the things for me to-night?”

“Yes,—at eleven. We have our favourite for the guard. I have spoken to him.”

“Then that is safe.”

Laura entered and whispered in Vergani’s ear.

“What’s the use of such caution before Benvenuto? Tell him he shall have it to-morrow—or, stop, tell him I will talk to him directly. Excuse me, good Benvenuto. Laura, sit down with our old friend—I dare say he can show you how the Spanish girls dance the fandango.”

Upon quitting the room, Vergani hastened up stairs. Laura had mentioned that Isabella had awoke, and was trying the door.

“So—so, fair lady,” said Vergani, as he entered; “my wife bolted this door for fear some one might intrude upon your slumbers.”

“The bolt *outside* would not have hindered that. Is the Captain near at hand? I would speak to him.”

“I wish you could, fair lady; but it would be difficult at present. They have found some



smuggled goods on board his vessel, and he is now taken to prison. I have sent some one to watch, and will release him before to-morrow night. I told my wife to bring you some sweet wine and water—have you tasted them ?”

“No. I am much too anxious to drink.”

“And I much too anxious to hear your history. You know how it is in my power to serve you, and how requisite it is that all should be a profound secret between us. You must entrust me with all confidence as to your life.”

“Indeed, I shall not be quite so communicative. I was told you knew my father, and could restore me to him.”

“You were rightly informed, in one respect—that is, that I know a great many fathers who have lost their children, and I occasionally find them, or some others to represent them ; but José Vergani would live upon nothing but macaroni, if he did not secure some profit from his exertions.”

“That is but reasonable, and I have means of being generous.”

“How, and where ?” asked Vergani, quickly.

Isabella, remembering the caution of Benvenuto, answered, "that certain letters had been despatched to various merchants, who, upon her presenting herself, would furnish money."

"And you have letters to them?"

"I have the means," replied Isabella, with firmness, "to prove that I am the person. As far as that is concerned, I shall not want your assistance. Have you any apartments for me?"

"The best in Naples, and close at hand; but I must beg you to honour *me* by accepting mine to-night, for yours cannot be occupied until to-morrow afternoon."

This announcement mortified Isabella; for the room in which she had slept was small, warm, and not over free from some of those vermin so common in Italian houses. But still the room had one charm—it overlooked the beautiful bay of Naples; and even Vergani's telescopes might beguile an hour—for there the idle sail flapped against the mast of the becalmed ship—there, also, numerous fishing-boats passed to and fro, and, close underneath, the idle lazzaroni told their tales of love and wonder.

“Then I must rest contented for the night ; but I fear I must incommode you.”

“Not the least, good lady. I have my orders to make you as comfortable as possible, and to use all endeavours to promote your interest.”

“And, in so doing, be assured your own will not be neglected. Do not let me engage your time from other affairs. I can sit at this window and watch the boats and shipping in the bay—it will amuse me much.”

“I am glad to find you so easily reconcile yourself to our poor hospitality. When the day draws to a close, and the sun is below the horizon, I will, with your permission, call upon you. You must be aware that without some clue, such as you yourself can give, I cannot find your parent. I leave this to your consideration. We must understand each other, or I must relinquish the affair. At what hour would you dine?”

“When the sun is down and the air cool, I could perhaps eat ; but I am far too much oppressed to think of that now.”

Vergani retired, and Isabella drew a deep, deep sigh. What was her situation? How could she rely upon so low, so cunning, a man

as Vergani. His eye was everywhere, and a sinister look accompanied every glance. Her friend—the only one she now could call a friend—was in prison, and who would protect her against any rudeness of her host? Then, again, his wife—the dislike was evident on her countenance—she did not disguise it; and the bolted door seemed to imply that she was a prisoner.

The intolerable heat prompted her to relieve herself of some of her garments, and the cool-looking water, which cast a glow on the glass, was too inviting to be refused; she drank with a thirst only known in warm climates, when the luxury of the draught compensates for the uneasiness of the parched palate. There was a curious taste, she was certain; but then in different places the water, she knew, acquired different tastes. She took down a small telescope, the use of which she had learned from Konigsmark, and adjusting the focus, beguiled a few minutes in admiring a large ship, which, with all her sails spread, was courting the light air from the westward, in order to gain the anchorage. By degrees she felt again inclined to sleep, and roused herself sufficiently to secure



her door ; then, yielding to the pleasant impulse, she divested herself of her dress, and throwing herself upon the sofa, courted the slumber which had nearly overcome her ; and there, secure in the belief of privacy, reclined in sweet slumbers the fairest form of Italy.

She had not been long asleep before a panel at the further end of the room gently glided back, and Laura, without her shoes, entered. Her first care was to assure herself that Isabella slept—as those always slept who tasted of the iced water or sweet wine of Vergani ; she then withdrew the two bottles, and left others, cautiously withdrawing and closing the panel. Vergani was instantly informed—for Vergani's wife was but a slave—one who dared not for a moment disobey the smallest wish of her husband. She was, as necessity required, either a smuggler, a spy, a watch-dog, a nurse, a servant, or a wife—the last was nominal, but requisite.

Vergani, with a footfall as light as the fall of snow, was soon at the panel, and here his wife interposed, and whispered “ She is undressed. Why should you go in ? There is the proof. She sleeps. I have changed the bottles.”



Vergani but gave one reproachful look, and Laura crouched in a corner like a stealthy tigress. The panel was withdrawn, and he entered. The sight before him was unexpected. Even he never contemplated so lovely a form, so glowingly displayed. He fixed his eyes upon her in wonder and amazement, and, having glutted his sight, he withdrew, closing the secret panel.

“How long has she been asleep?” he said, in a whisper to his wife.

“About ten minutes, at the most.”

“Come down with me ; I have a note for you to take to some one on the Chiaja. Mind how you deliver it—and be quick. Let me have no loitering by the way.—And have I yet to give you lessons in your duty ? How came those impertinent words from your lips ?”

Laura’s eyes quailed before the piercing glance of Vergani’s—yet she could revenge, and fearfully revenge. Her heart was but the lodging-house of good actions, but the permanent residence of all ill ones.

“Go,” said Vergani—“see the Prince yourself ; and if not within, trace him, as you have often done before, and find him. Should

he be out of Naples, upon some of these foolish parties of pleasure, take this to the Doria ; tell either the one or the other that after two hours from this time the opportunity will be lost."

"So, good Benvenuto, your fair charge sleeps, and will soon recover from the fatigue of her voyage. To-morrow we will set about finding her a father—and," continued Vergani, with a smile, "it is extraordinary how glad men are to recover their lost children."

"And so would you, Vergani, with all your sneer."

"Yes, if I lost my son in Calabria I could not easily replace him ; nor would all our men follow a stranger. I should regret him as one most useful to me ; but, for the affection, we have been too long separated for that. My men will be near you to-night. I have arranged everything, and to-morrow we will settle accounts."

"Good," replied Felipo, who felt somewhat the effect of the wine,—“good—agreed—<sup>her</sup> your hand, only, that no harm shall come to her."

"Harm!" interrupted Vergani ; "how would harming her benefit us?"

“It is possible that it would benefit you,” replied Felipo, with a cunning look. “But come, come, we are both honourable men, as far as we ourselves are concerned, we would do no wrong to any. Your hand, Vergani.”

“And yours, good Benvenuto. We must live ; and fair play is the best policy.”

They parted—the one to arrange a bribe for an officer to betray his trust ; the other to ripen his plan to cheat his friend, and to sell his charge to the highest bidder. They were both most honourable men in their own estimation.

## CHAPTER IV.

“THIS will be a good affair,” said Vergani to himself, as he rubbed his hands with delight. “The prince and the duke bid high for the prize, and she must be removed out of temptation; for, once clear of my threshold, and I have no power over her. Benvenuto sleeps soundly in gaol—that was a master stroke of mine, having him arrested in the act of smuggling. But now to the lady, who will be little inclined for active measures; she will be drowsy for a week to come.”

The manner of Vergani had altered entirely; there was an obsequiousness, a readiness to oblige, a willingness to be of service, which admirably succeeded with the unsuspecting Isabella.

Awakening with an unaccountable lassitude, she felt more disposed to remain quiet than to undergo the exertions of walking. Vergani offered to convey her into her new apartment in a carriage, and, moving her carefully to the window, expressed a wish that the mild balminess of the sea-breeze might restore her to activity. "It is but what most people feel either in Sicily or Naples, when they first arrive. You must have been much fatigued, for you have slept the whole night, and even forgot your dinner. By the Virgin!" said Vergani, making a most orthodox cross, "I could never sleep in my life without a supper."

"I feel but little inclined for breakfast," said Isabella, with a faint smile; "but, since your kind wife has brought me this chocolate and toast—a meal we are much accustomed to in Spain—I must try and appear grateful for her kindness."

"And now, fair lady, do you feel inclined to give me so much of your former life as to afford me a clue to your parentage?"

"All that I can give is said in a sentence. I believe, if I can credit my memory, that I



heard my supposed parents when they fled from Calabria with me"——

"Calabria!" interrupted Vergani.

"Good man," said Isabella, faintly, "if you would hear my account of myself, before I fall asleep again, do not interrupt me. It was twelve or thirteen years ago that I was forced from the secluded cottage in which we lived, to accompany Marvelli and his wife."

"Who did you say? Marvelli!"

"Marvelli! what new wonder is that?"

Vergani leaped from his seat, and taking the left hand of Isabella, in an instant bared her arm nearly to the shoulder; a flush covered his face, and with a glow of satisfaction and delight he exclaimed, "St. Francisco be praised! he shall have four candles burnt to his honour this evening."

Isabella, although half overcome by the deleterious mixture she had drank the preceding night, resisted this attack upon her modesty, and her fine eyes lit up with a moment's fierce anger. Vergani heeded it not, but applying a small whistle to his mouth, blew one sharp, shrill note; then taking down a telescope, he, as sailors say, swept the bay. "Ah!" he ex-

claimed, not noticing Isabella—"there she is, and may see the signal;" with that he unrolled the flag, and hung it carelessly from the window.

"Pray take back that vile flag," said Isabella; "it keeps out all the air."

Vergani never heeded a word, but called aloud, "Pedro!"

Pedro answered from below, and was desired to come up. A quick torrent of words fell on his ear in a whisper, and the man disappeared.

Vergani having in an instant formed his resolution, was quick in his measures; his promptness and his genius had saved him, hundreds of times, in danger, and in intrigue no one was his equal; he wore any feature which circumstances required, and could be apparently gay and happy whilst his heart was sad; he was as devoid of feeling as the hardest rock; nothing moved him but money, nothing animated him above his usual level, but the excitement of some daring adventure. It was said in Naples, that he was enormously rich, had lands and houses in Sicily, and that more than one vessel, which daily might be seen in

the bay, apparently fishing, waited there for the arrival of vessels which threw overboard the contraband goods, which the boat conveyed in safety to nooks unknown even to the guarda costas. No one opposed a landing; the soldier was bribed, and the officer participated occasionally in the venture. Vergani fed many; his whistle could surround him with ruffians devoted entirely to him, and few cared to interfere with one who paid highly for his security: still Vergani was an object of apprehension, and the police would gladly have crushed him if they had caught him unprepared; he, too, was watched by one of his own men, who was in the pay of high authorities.

Isabella soon fell into a gentle slumber, and again the wine and water was changed. She cooled her parched lips with the iced water, and this time felt confident a more pungent taste was evident; she ate too with some feeble appetite, and, more aroused than formerly, she begged to see Vergani, in order to endeavour to liberate Benvenuto. Laura could only answer that her husband was away; that she dared not move in any business without him; and that he was a person who never forgave an offence.

“Poor creature!” she added, with a tone of real pity; “you are in his grasp, nor will you easily escape.”

“It is rarely a wife speaks so of her husband!”

“It is seldom a wife finds so great a tyrant in a husband.”

“We are taught to bear with the trifling humours of men, when we espouse them.”

“We cannot forget that we are women.” If Isabella’s beauty had not excited the envy of Laura, the latter would have felt a sincere interest in befriending her: but she hated her for her youth, and detested her for her beauty.

Isabella expressed a wish to walk and see her new apartments. Laura did not know where they were, and feigned an excuse that the heat was oppressive.

“Beneath the shade of those trees on the chiaja, sheltered from its rays, and fanned by the breeze, I think I should soon recover from this oppression, this desire to sleep.

There was a degree of malice in the words in which Laura replied, “It would be dangerous for one so very beautiful to fall asleep *there*; besides, Vergani will return soon; it is only



three o'clock ; when the cooler breeze of the evening comes, a walk might benefit you."

"Perhaps you are right, madam," replied Isabella, languidly ; "it is strange this beautiful climate should so overpower me."

Whatever might have been Isabella's recollection of one certain Count, it was evident Vergani went not in that direction ; he directed his steps across the promontory in the direction of Pozzuolo, and stopping at a low, miserable hut, he blew his whistle ; he was answered in a moment, and giving a bundle which he carried to the woman who appeared, he desired her to place it in a room up stairs. Vergani was well known to all in this hovel ; they made no remark, but obeyed, whilst he himself, passing through a small garden, walked along the south side of a small bay to a rocky point which projected into the sea. Here for some time he remained, looking towards Naples ; and having consulted the time, he returned moodily to the cottage. Without bestowing a word upon the woman or her daughter, he went to the room, and in a few minutes came down dressed as a signor of distinction ; the habitual slouch of manner was discarded with the gar-



ment, and Vergani looked the character he assumed. On passing the hostess, he remarked, "You know, good woman, how profitable it is neither to see, hear, nor speak; and putting his finger to his lips to ensure silence, he passed out of the door, taking an almost unfrequented path over the hills, with which he seemed well acquainted.

Vergani's visits of this kind were so frequent, that they passed without a remark, the daughter merely saying, "He looks like a prince as well as a beggar, whichever character he assumes. I wonder what he is plotting now; he generally used to speak to me, but to-day he said not one word."

"Never heed his words or his deeds, child, excepting when the former are orders, and the latter require concealment; he is a good friend to us, and to the poor everywhere. Go to your work, child; remember we have neither tongue, eyes, nor ears; he will be back soon, for he has left his proper dress up stairs."

Descending the hill on the further side, Vergani came in sight of the splendid domain of the Count de Meraviglia, and he stopped to

gaze on its beauties, a thousand times seen before, but never with so much delight as now. It seemed, with all its beauties, as if wanting the sound of children's voices to enliven it. The woods were filled with the cheerful notes of the birds, but there was a loneliness and apparent barrenness—not a soul was to be seen, the many windows all were closed—not a human creature seemed to exist in a place which to the eye was a paradise.

Vergani surveyed it in a pensive mood ; and then having become satiated with its loneliness, he passed rapidly on, until, coming upon the road, which wound round the hill he had passed over, he arrived at the entrance. A surly dog growled at a distance ; and an old woman, apparently astonished at so much noise, put her head from a small window, and seeing a well-dressed man approaching, she soon exhibited her portly figure from a door.

“ I must see the Count, with your kind permission, madam.”

“ He sees no one, signor,” was the reply. “ For twelve long years, since the useless search he made throughout Italy, he has retired from the world.”

“He sees a priest, does he not?” said Vergani, with an ill-suppressed sneer.

“He does,” replied the woman, eyeing Vergani; “but the Signor is not of the church.”

“No; nor much of the congregation either. But, church or no church, priest or no priest, I must see the Count; or it will be the worst day’s work he ever made since the loss of his child.”

“What do you know of that?” asked the woman.

“More than you know, and more than the Count will know,” replied Vergani, coolly, “without you gain me admission. Look you, good woman; I cannot waste my time in many words; I must, before the sun has set, return to Naples. Go; apprise the Count of my coming.”

“And what name am I to say?”

“I am not at all particular under what name you announce me. As I shall not give you my own, you are welcome to christen me after your favourite saint, or the one in whom the Count has most faith; for myself, I prefer St. Francisco; but when things go wrong, and no notice is taken of my candles, then I light up

St. Christoforo. Call me what you like, but call quickly."

The large dog came to keep guard ; but, to the old woman's surprise, Vergani called it by its name, and the fierce brute licked his hand and wagged his tail. The woman looked astonished.

"He is old now," said Vergani. "This animal must be at least thirteen, and has a good memory : he knows the hand that fed him well."

The old lady piously crossed herself,—looked particularly at the foot of Vergani,—returned to find her master,—taking care to close the door upon the visitor, who remained outside.

"Oh, oh ! Nettuno," said Vergani, playing with the dog, and taking from his pocket a large biscuit which he had purposely brought, "let us renew our acquaintance ; it might be as well to keep your tongue quiet."

The dog was coaxed into kindness, and laid down to be caressed. This was the Count's safeguard !—the terror of the few who ever approached the chateau ! It was this dog which caused the loss of his only child. The Count had bought it of Vergani, who brought

the animal to the chateau ; and on his return to steal the dog, found the child just within the wood : of the two, he preferred the infant ; and it was sent to Marvelli, at the concealed glen in Calabria.

It was about the price offered for its recovery that the dispute had arisen.

Marvelli intended to have sailed round Cape Spartivento, and to have landed at Roseto, a small town in the Gulf of Tarentum ; but seeing he was pursued, he steered towards the coast of Greece, until he got too far to turn back, on account of the provisions and the quarter from which the wind blew. Isabella had but a vague notion of all this, and was only right in one or two particulars.

Marvelli had intended, with the money he had taken and the reward offered by the Count, to have retired from piracy on land,—from his association with a horde of contrabandists,—and from his acquaintance with Vergani,—who then, as now, directed affairs at Naples, and concealed his produce in the almost inaccessible mountains of Calabria. Here Marvelli commanded ; and the interference of Vergani, and his wish to possess the child, in order him-



self to receive the reward, which was enormous, led to the battle and the blows, and, finally, to all the miseries of one born in splendour, and nursed in the lap of luxury.

The old woman seemed the only servant of the establishment,—and yet the chateau would require at least twenty to keep it in proper cleanliness,—and she was by no means as active as the disposition of Vergani could have wished. Every now and then he looked at the sun, and knew to five minutes the hour of the day. He began to grow impatient; but he had a great prospect before him, and an honourable retirement, with a fearful character: he therefore was resolved not to lose the present opportunity, and continued encouraging the dog.

The old servant knocked at the Count's door, and was desired to enter.

“Always, good Count,—always angry. Will your heart never know the luxury of forgiveness?”

“Not until it has known the satisfaction of revenge. For twelve years have I promised myself that satisfaction; and oh! if ever chance should throw him in my footpath, (he who has

so much injured me,) by that I swear—and he pointed to a crucifix—and have sworn for years, that I will be dreadfully, fearfully revenged. For what purpose did you disturb me, at the moment I was glutting myself in imagination?”

The Count Maraviglia was about fifty, but of a strong frame, and vigorous health. His grey hairs might indicate a worn spirit; but his quick and resolute eye, his brawny arms and sinewy legs, showed his strength unimpaired. He would for hours and hours, at night, roam over his dark wood, fancying he heard the voice of his beloved child, and the exercise he thus took kept him in robust health; but he never slept without his vow of vengeance being repeated, and his first words breathed the same determined spirit.

“There is one outside who would speak to you.”

“Of what?” said the Count, hastily.

“I know not; but he is a strange man, of good appearance.”

“His name?”

“Whatever you please to call him; for he says by any name he may be called.”

“Tell him to go hence. I have no means, if I had the will, to be hospitable,—although I could buy half Naples. If he wants to eat, commend him to the house across the hill; if he loiters, place the dog upon his track.”

“He knows the dog, and called it by its name.”

“Has he ever served me?”

“Not within my memory.”

“He must be of uncommon blood to have won Nettuno’s heart. He may come in.”

Vergani had not been idle. Apparently playing with the dog, his eyes surveyed the chateau: there might be wealth here, and little hazard in obtaining it. He followed the old woman to the Count’s room.

“He is here,” said the woman; and, opening the door, Vergani entered.

“You have to speak with me, I am informed?”

“And rightly,” replied Vergani, after having made a most gentlemanly salutation; “but as we all have our fancies, mine is never to speak before a third person.”

“You may retire, Francesca.”

The old lady again crossed herself, closed

the door, and muttered,—“No, no; the devil never likes witnesses.”

“Your business, sir?” said the Count, sharply, pointing to a chair.

“Is yours,” replied Vergani, in haste.

“Then it is easily dispatched. To what does it relate?”

“Your child.”

The Count started on his feet, and with a quivering lip, as if the words had unmanned him, he faltered out a repetition—“my child?”

“Ay, your child.”

“Does she live,—does she live?” said the Count, falling into Vergani’s arms.

“The child lives, is well, and waits but for the promised reward, to be restored.”

“It can be paid in a moment;—it is in the house. Bring me but my child, and twice the sum is yours.”

“The original was no trifle, Count; would you sign a bond as to the double?”

“Directly. But how shall I know my child again?—how shall I be certain it is her?”

“By witnesses beyond all doubt. By the man who stole her,—by the mark made upon

her arm before those witnesses,—and by the words of her own mouth.”

“Heavens! what a ray of hope breaks upon my almost distracted mind! When can I have her again safe under my own roof?—when shall I clasp her again in my arms?—when feel and know myself a father, with an inheritor of my own blood to inhabit this castle?”

“I must go,” said Vergani, looking towards the window.

“When shall I see you again?”

“To-morrow, at noon.”

“Bring with you the bond,—bind me as tightly as the worst of lawyers can invent, I will not shrink from the word. Your name?”

“José Vergani.”

“José Vergani! Then a double pleasure awaits me.”



## CHAPTER V.

“JOSE VERGANI,” said the Count to himself. “Now is the mystery of the dog unravelled. On him, for years, have my suspicions been fixed, and through him a proposition came, of a similar nature, many years ago. Since then he declared his inability to aid me, and of a sudden withdrew from Gaita, where he then lived, and bore but an indifferent character; but my revenge shall sweep him from the earth. I feel a renovated being,—firstly, I am convinced my daughter lives; secondly, that by stratagem I may discover him who has blighted my life.”

Vergani, clear of the grounds, struck through the same path which led over the mountain. “So eager to see her, so ready to double the bond, more may yet be got. The Duke and

the Prince must now be made jealous. This is a golden affair ; and Benvenuto, removed, perhaps ruined, his vessel probably confiscated, will never cross my path. I forgot my candles to St. Francisco—but he shall have double to-morrow. The saints must make some allowances for the hurry of business.”

Arrived at the cottage, he took the old woman aside, and bade her have her room prepared for a strange lady ; and the strictest orders were given to keep her away from every one,—not even the daughter was to see her. “ You know,” said Vergani, “ I reward well—so do I punish disobedience. Look you, mother, if this woman escapes, if any one sees her, you may beg your bread in the streets, and another will occupy this cottage. She will be here about two in the morning, and land at yonder point by the cave. Keep a vigilant look-out, and if there be cause of alarm show the signal. I shall be here to-morrow ; and if your charge grows riotous, you have the means of making her sleep without much endangering her health. I fancy she will be more inclined to doze than to talk.”

“ Your orders shall be obeyed.”

“ It is better that they should be, if you value comfort more than beggary.”

Vergani, having changed his dress, took his bundle, and, with the activity of a younger man, was soon on the high road to Naples.

This cottage stood away from the high road, and was concealed from sight. A small rising ground hid it entirely on the land side, and the thick grove of trees in which it was ensconced veiled it from the sea. It was Vergani's property—the fruit of successful contraband trade, and more useful for that purpose from the large caves which were near the shore, and yet almost in the centre of the wood.

The woman and the daughter lived there, strangers to the world. Whenever they saw more of the bustle of life, it was at Naples, when Vergani required their presence, and they were brought in a boat. For more than fourteen years had that old woman and her daughter resided there, and never had a stranger, excepting Marvelli, ever crossed the threshold. Although it stood within a quarter of a mile of the high road, so thick, and so apparently path-

less, was the underwood of the plantation, that no one crossed it.

All had gone right at Naples,—indeed, seldom any undertaking of Vergani's went otherwise. Quick in his resolves, daring in his undertakings, with a clear head and ready hand, he was as formidable as a foe as he was useful as a friend. Money was his sole desire, yet he gave liberally where he calculated upon a generous return.

At ten o'clock, when all was beginning to be hushed, Isabella, scarcely sensible, was taken into the cool night air, and walked towards the beach. The night was calm and clear, and the sea scarcely rippled to the shore. Afar off was heard the serenade of some devoted lover, whilst all the bustle and noise of human kind, struggling for subsistence, and toiling for a paltry recompence, had gradually subsided into silence. A boat's bow was on the beach, within a few yards of where Laura and her charge were seated.

“How beautiful is this!” said Isabella; “and how well it harmonizes with the fearful depression of my spirits! It is strange, this great de-

sire to sleep, which for ever seems overcoming me. I feel a languid sensation which dulls all energy, and my appetite and my spirits have forsaken me."

"It is the change of air," replied Laura. "At this season of the year, few strangers can overcome it; and many, like yourself, only leave their houses in the evening, when the breeze is cooler. Some go out in boats into the bay, and soon recover, assisted by the bracing coldness of the sea breeze."

"Look yonder," said Isabella, already much recovered; "there is a boat with a red light—how beautiful it looks on the water!"

"It is some fisherman, who, perhaps, makes known to his family that he is near at hand. How calm and still everything is around! I envy those poor fellows who enjoy the coolness of the water."

"And so do I," said Isabella; "how my heart throbs to be once more on that placid ocean!"

"It need not wear itself out for that," said Laura. "Let us get into this boat—it belongs to my husband—and we can go a short distance and look upon the town. I have rowed a boat



half my life. I love the excitement ; and as the night is calm there can be no danger."

Isabella readily entered into the plan. She was placed in the boat, and Laura, launching her with scarcely an effort, pushed the boat from the shore as she jumped into it. It was evident she had not overrated her powers, for she handled the oars like a practised person. At first they drifted off gently, but little by little Laura stealthily applied more force, which the increased phosphorescent sparkling of the water would have betrayed to a practised eye.

Isabella mused unsuspectingly on the scene. Her heart was full—her present strange existence—her future hopes and fears—came over her like a dream, and her eyes fell upon the scene with all the vacancy of a trance. She was suddenly awakened to a sense of danger. The boat with a red light was alongside, and four men were on board. Laura was in the other boat. They were separated—the one boat made for the shore, and the four men, without a remark, pulled with all their power, making for the northern part of the bay. Before two o'clock, Isabella was a prisoner in the cottage ; and as the clear moon shone through

the trees, she could form some idea of her secluded position.

She asked no useless questions. She was told that she would be attended upon with all kindness—that no harm or insult would be offered her—that escape was impossible—and that any attempt must prove abortive, and lead to unkindness and restraint. There was a degree of benevolence even in the manner of announcing such a disagreeable truth, and Isabella, at once resigned to her fate, retired to her bed. One thing was evident—the change was for the better ; everything was clean and neat, but everything was awfully still, monotonous, and melancholy.

In the meantime, Benvenuto had been released—a wholesome bribe to the officer made matters easy. All Neapolitans, like Russians, can be bribed ; the smallness of their pay, and their general propensity for gambling, make money the *summum bonum*. Benvenuto became, through the demoralized officer, acquainted with the informer, and the blood of the honest captain was roused to revenge. In order to forward that plan, he had conveyed to Vergani's huge cellars sundry contraband

articles, having a mark painted on each case, which his men, and the men employed as porters, could recognise. These were all safely stowed away without the slightest suspicion; and Benvenuto, like most Italians, slept soundly on board his own vessel, and had delightful dreams of vengeance.

The Count Meraviglia, after the departure of Vergani, soon found his way to Naples. Possessed of great wealth, he naturally had great power—for one means the other. He had not been seen in the town for years, and on his inquiring for the chief of the police, he found one of the friends of his boyhood in that high and responsible situation. The warm friendship of youth returned in all its former force upon the recognition. The long story of all the sufferings experienced by the Count were listened to without the smallest signs of impatience; and it was only when Vergani's name was mentioned, that the chief of the police seemed agitated.

“Vergani,” replied the Chief, “has been for some time carefully watched, but eludes us like a shadow. He seems ubiquitous, and so well informed is he of all our arrangements, that he

himself denounced the captain of a schooner as a contrabandist, only the day before yesterday, when we had organized a beautiful scheme by which we were to have taken him in the act of aiding and abetting in the smuggling ; he foiled us thus, and left Naples ; but I hear he is just returned. We must not alarm him, or the child you hope to find will be removed to Calabria, where long ago Vergani himself lived, associated with a band of ruffians, who saved the government much trouble by quarrelling amongst themselves and separating. We have no doubt that the celebrated St. José, as the lazzaroni call him, has still some communication with those parts. Your offer to pay the reward at once might excite him to an attack upon your house, and the dog would evidently be no protection. To-morrow, at twelve o'clock, you say, he is to be with you—leave the rest to me ; await his coming. We must not surprise him hastily, or he will retain your daughter in some seclusion, and the principal object of your life will be lost. Fear not my wanting activity in so good a cause ; besides, it is a righteous and just cause, and the cause of my friend.”

Meraviglia shook his hand warmly, and the tears started from his eyes. "I am more bound to that child, from the circumstance of her mother dying shortly after its birth; and the last smile which lit up her countenance before she expired was occasioned by the solemn oath I swore, to love and cherish that infant. It was my blind kindness that suffered her to play about unwatched, because she loved independence; but who could have imagined, that on such an estate, so secluded, a child could be an object coveted, unless for the sake of a reward, and this was sought, but never obtained."

"Farewell, my old friend; business shall not make me forget your cares and your hopes. Before long, we shall see the Count Meraviglia the first at the court. New prospects will arise when your daughter is restored, and the solitary abode will be converted into a palace of hospitality."

The net was spread to enclose Vergani; but they had to capture a man as subtle as a snake. He moved about like a phantom, apparently openly—always covertly. Benvenuto knew him well, and feared his associates, and



yet he was desperately resolved to be revenged. Accordingly, he sauntered from his vessel, and after visiting one or two of his companions, he walked to the chief of the police, and obtained admission there under the pledge of secrecy and of protection to himself. He related the smuggling event; the marks, and the places where the property was concealed.

“When rogues fall out,” said the Chief, “honest men get their due. You were so bound up with him—how came you to quarrel?”

“About a woman,” replied Benvenuto.

“I thought that was an affair of a stiletto, amongst honourable men of your calling.”

“It was no intrigue; it arose from a lady I brought from Spain, whose father Vergani knows, and for whose restoration to her family we expected a great reward, to be shared between us. I took the lady to his house, and then he, to place me in a position so as to render me completely in his power, denounced me to the police. It is now my turn to repay him in the coin which I borrowed of him.”

“And where is this lady now?”

“Concealed in his house, I believe.”

“ And is she contented ?

“ St. Francisco de Padua only knows, for Vergani took care I never saw her again. Ah, signor ! Vergani, his wife, and his chief assistant, would puzzle the Devil himself, if he sought to catch them unawares. They never sleep all at once, and I am as well aware, as that I am here, that he knows well enough where to find me at this moment, and, unless I can get your protection to my vessel, you will have to make inquiries about my death by this evening.”

“ We will see you safe to your vessel, good man.” And, rising from his seat, he desired one of his attendants to escort Benvenuto to the schooner.

Vergani's whistle would have brought many to the summons, and the police of Naples knew how insufficient they were to seize this saint of a lazzaroni, without occasioning a tumult. Besides, it was requisite to have something tangible for the arrest ; hitherto, nothing was kept in his house, and if placed there for the moment, always removed. Now, the forced restraint of the woman might succeed, and one who formerly had been of a desperate gang

which infested the road about Terracina, and who had, to save himself, sacrificed the rest, and become a useful man to the state, in the shape of one employed by the police, was duly instructed in his lesson, and sent to inquire about this woman.

The better to obtain the protection of Vergani, he rushed suddenly into his house, and throwing himself on his knees, besought protection and concealment, as he was pursued by some soldiers, for having revenged himself on a man with whom his wife was too intimate.

Vergani, who always seemed forewarned of danger, called upon one or two of his men to seize the intruder as a murderer. "I conceal no person, and no property," said Vergani. "Justice will be done you by the law, and those who administer it. Let the police be informed of this."

The wily fellow acted his part to perfection. He begged, implored, supplicated, and, when he found Vergani inexorable, he went into so well-acted a fit, that Laura, who had seen a few in her time, declared it proper for medical

aid to be called in, and the nearest barber was summoned.

The fit had subsided, but left the patient so weak that he could not stir. Vergani, who always looked on with an eye of suspicion, desired he might be turned out; but the barber, a very influential person, who was somewhat alarmed for his own reputation, having been called in, declared that the man would die if left in the sun.

“Then let him stay where he is,” replied Vergani; “but let him understand, that he is only kept here until the police arrives, or he, breaking the restraint, escapes unaided.”

The sufferer expressed his gratitude, and lay down on the floor, in the most public and inconvenient part of the house.

“Take him up stairs,” said Laura, “he will be more quiet.” And forthwith the spy was placed in the part he most wished to visit.

His eyes languidly travelled over the room, and the only thing which seemed to indicate anything like the residence of a woman, was a dark thick veil, which was on the sofa. By degrees, this adept first sunk into a fainting fit,

and afterwards counterfeited sleep so admirably, that the man sent to watch him ventured below, to rejoice his heart with a glass of Rosolio. That time was not lost. The room was examined, but no trunk, or box, or any indication but the veil existed, and as the spy was sure of protection, he took the liberty to conceal this in the red shawl which was tied about his waist. He soon went down below, sauntered to the door, and was allowed to escape ; it being no part of Vergani's plan to come in contact with the hounds of justice on any pretence.

There were fewer loiterers than usual about Vergani's house ; but he remained at the close of the evening, sitting listlessly at his door, whilst his wife bustled about with unusual importance.

"Signor Vergani," said a tall bony man, "I have an order to examine a certain cellar in your house. Last night goods were seen taken from a schooner, and watched to your house. My men are numerous, and are within hail. Let me do my duty, without hindrance."

"By all means," said Vergani. "I will accompany you. Ho, Laura ! give us lights, and



bring me the keys. So well informed, good sir, pray direct me as to which you will search first."

"This one," replied the officer, looking at the house, as if verifying the marks by which he was to be directed.

"Good," said Vergani. "Let this be opened. Will you descend?"

"After you, signor. You know your own house best, and can conduct me."

"By all means; but mayhap you might wish one or two of your men to accompany you?"

"It would be as well." A signal note showed men at all points, carelessly advancing, apparently unconcerned. A warning of the hand beckoned two forward, and the rest turned upon their heels, and seemed to walk away.

"That is well planned," said Vergani; "but what for? If you wish it, have all your men. Search, and satisfy yourself; Vergani has nothing to conceal—nothing to fear. I will show you the way. It is rather deep, and we keep it closely locked. This way—mind, the ladder may be slippery. Mark, here is a round mis-

sing. Take care, good gentlemen,—that's safely done. Now sir, here is the light—this way." And Vergani led them to a stone door, which he opened. "There is nothing kept here. My wines are further on."

"Proceed."

He led them through extensive cellars, all empty, until he appeared confused, and said, "That is all—I have no more."

"Pardon," replied the officer; "one more in this direction."

"Ah," said Vergani, "I had forgotten this. I keep my wine here. Pray examine."

The last man who came in, had been directed to shut the door, to prevent the escape of Vergani, and it was done. "Good," said the officer; "here are the marks."

"What marks?" said Vergani, as he approached the officer.

"There; these are the goods I came to seize."

"Pray take them," said Vergani, who at that moment extinguished the light. "I wish you joy of your prize."

A dead silence ensued for a moment, but something like the closing of a door was heard,

and a retreating whistle and a song announced that Vergani had found another exit, and was walking very leisurely away. In vain the officer and his men called; when they ceased, they could indistinctly hear a note or two, and then all was silent.

“He is off!” said the officer; “but we can soon find a light.” And he took from his pocket a flint and steel, and by lighting a cigar, produced a flame, and obtained light. They found themselves enclosed, without the possibility of escape. The cases were every one empty, and no ingenuity could open the door by which it was supposed Vergani had retreated; neither could they retrace their steps, but were snugly impounded.

## CHAPTER VI.

VERGANI was seen slowly walking to the beach, and embarking with another man in his own boat. The men previously stationed by the officer did not interfere with him; they had no orders to that effect, and Neapolitans, then as now, are slow to incur either risk or fatigue. Idleness at Naples amounts to a virtue. It is covered with a silken net to enclose the idle and secure the frivolous; a murder might be committed in the streets, and not a man would trouble himself to seize the perpetrator of the crime. The busy activity of the chief, who was anxious for the capture of this man, led to his being followed. A person was despatched on horseback to ride along the

coast, but not to interfere with the dreaded José, further than to watch his motions.

In the mean time, the Count Meraviglia, distracted between hope and anxiety, took precautions against a midnight intrusion, by summoning his peasantry, and selecting a few in whom he had most confidence. To these he mentioned his apprehensions. One remarked, "that mayhap the man feared was the St. José of the lazzaroni?" The Count confirmed the remark, and a general inclination to depart was visible, so much afraid were these men of one apparently so quiet, and yet in reality so formidable. José's vengeance was more feared than an eruption of Vesuvius; but as the Count was charitable in his solitude, and derived his greatest source of gratification from assisting those around him, the gratitude overcame the apprehension, and four or five were quartered in the château.

In the mean time, Vergani had arrived at the cottage, and proceeded to the apartment of Isabella.

"You find this abode, I hope," he began, "better selected for your recovery from your



sea voyage than my house at Naples. I have directed that you receive whatever you require."

"Excepting," said Isabella, haughtily, "my liberty. Why am I here detained? why forbidden to venture beyond the door? Am I your prisoner, that you use me thus?"

"There are people at Naples who would injure you, and mar your prospects; the brightest hope you could entertain will, by to-morrow's sunset, be realized. You will be in your father's arms, and he is a man of high degree."

"Then why keep me here? why not at once take me to him?"

"It is a Neapolitan's nature to go slowly—neither will I be spurred forward against my better judgment. Could José Vergani live, if, when he obtained a prize, he gave it to others unrewarded? Your liberty might compromise my life. Look you at this mark upon your arm; that mark was made by my hand when you were stolen. Two other children were taken by others. To assure ourselves to whom you respectively belonged, the initials of each of your names were marked upon the left

arm ; the other two were returned for their ransom. Your father vowed vengeance upon those who had robbed him, and was so violent in his wrath that we feared to return you. Marvelli placed you beyond our reach. You return now when time has soothed your father's rage, and retirement from the world has made him more eager for your society, than for vengeance upon me. I require the ransom to be paid, and it is promised. When it is done, you are free—you become, from an outcast, the daughter of the great Count Meraviglia. You see I work but for your good, and what may your liberality offer for this great benefit I bestow ?”

“ What do you merit for all the misery I have undergone, and for the load I must ever bear upon my heart ?”

“ I exonerate myself from all but the theft. If I had been listened to, you would have been returned with the others. It was the cupidity of Marvelli, who, knowing the riches to which you were heiress, wished to force the Count to a higher reward ; upon this we quarrelled, and you know the result. Remember this—at present you are my prisoner, an hostage for a

ransom. In five minutes I could embark you for the very spot from which Marvelli took you. In an equally short time I could make you the mistress of a duke or a prince, and in concealment force you to accept either the one or the other. Their offers are high. I own to you that I covet riches ; for this have I toiled for years, and not unsuccessfully. Your return depends much upon your promises ; firstly, of secrecy, sworn upon the blessed crucifix, as to him who took and him who restores you ; secondly, that annually, a sum large in appearance, small in comparison to the good you receive, shall be paid me. This done, we stand thus—you will be restored to your rank and station, I made affluent ; you will retain the power of violating your oath, I the power of revenge. You have to choose between the sacrifice of your money or the life of the lowest—that life which is burthensome in youth, and loathsome in age. But mark well this—the oath here written, and which on your knees, before this crucifix, which many a dying lip has kissed, you will take, will be followed by one from me, that I will never molest or betray you, as long

as you hold to your contract; but that the instant I am betrayed, or the secrecy disregarded—this!” And drawing from his red band a small phial of a clear fluid, he showed her the word *veleno*. “Or this!” And a stiletto, the same rusty blade, with the polished point, which she had remarked in his room, was exhibited. “I am everywhere; the power of José Vergani is greater than the Pope’s. Are you content to swear?”

“I am; but I regret to do it, since the Count Konigsmark has been deceived by Vratz, who spoke of you honourably.”

“Sign! Read this on your knees, and hold this to your lips. I tell you, that many who have sworn upon this crucifix, and broken their promises, have, at the last minute of their existence suddenly terminated, confessed their perfidy on this very cross. Beware, therefore!”

“I have no choice, but obey, resolved never to betray you under any circumstances, and to pay this amount annually, when I have the means.”

“Enough! I shall know of your ability to pay as well as yourself. It is done! Mind!

should I stand at the bar of justice, and you sworn to speak the truth, my identity is to be denied in all and every case."

"I swear!"

"Hark! there is my whistle. Remember!"

"And to-morrow?"

"You will be recognised as the young Countess de Meraviglia. Again!—then the danger is nearer than I thought."

Vergani, with the activity of a greyhound, dropped from the window, and in an instant was lost to sight.

What a torrent of thought rushed over the mind of Isabella! yet one predominated—the hope of being the lawful bride of Konigsmark. She forgot, and she forgave, as only woman can forgive, the injury and the neglect she had experienced. As a countess of high rank, of large fortune, of known family, she would become his equal; and she still believed in his love. Such is ever the confiding woman—betrayed, and yet believing, neglected, yet still loving, confident of infidelity, and yet forgiving. A new dawn seemed to break upon her, a new sun seemed about to rise, and Vratz's remark of her taper fingers about to be realized. She



felt that inward elasticity of mind which sometimes is believed to be the forerunner of a fortunate event, as those whose health is neglected, and whose spirits are low, augur the coming of misfortune. There is scarcely a moment without these fanciful impressions upon the minds of all ; and history makes mention of thousands who have believed themselves forewarned of their death, and in consequence made preparations for it, whilst others have courted fortune even in lotteries, believing that *something* good was about to occur.

Isabella's mind, recalled to itself after the lapse of some moments of hope and joy, naturally turned to the present scene. Vergani, on hearing the second whistle, had spoken of dangers nigh at hand ; instead of going out by the door, he had preferred the window, and from that side the thick wood had concealed him in an instant. Then what could mean the oath to which she had voluntarily sworn ?

The greatest admirers of Isabella could never have accused her of too great a submission to the duties of religion. A thousand chances to one were against her ever having confessed. Curiosity might have tempted her within the

walls of St. John, at Valetta, and the Spanish capital would have shown her the “irradiated shrines, or emblazoned floors,” which dying misers had bequeathed to atone for sins unrequited ; but no warnings of conscience, no ebullition of the heart, had ever prompted her to visit these sacred fanes, in order to pour out her soul in prayer, or listen to the exhortations of the priests. In early life she had no opportunity, and Konigsmark weaned her from all religious thoughts, making himself her earthly divinity.

Still the oath resounded in her ears as a most sacred obligation. It was, besides, an honest bargain fairly made—she, on one side, stipulating to observe silence, and pay annual sums ; Vergani offering, in exchange, to restore her to her father—to her rights, titles, and estates. She looked from her window, and she heard unusual shouts ; these sounded strangely in the almost universal silence. The bark of the dog, and the voice of the men had, at length, penetrated the thick forest. Once or twice she thought of crying for assistance to liberate her from her gaol. Then she remembered Vergani’s look, and the rusty stiletto. Again

she almost took courage, as a strange voice seemed to come from a not far distant point. At this moment she felt a tap on the shoulder; she turned, and the woman under whose care she was placed, warned her of her oath, closed the window, and, leading her along through various places, finally deposited her in a cave. "Remain silent, and you are safe; advance, scream, or call for assistance, and Vergani's threat will be put in execution."

"But, I pray you," said Isabella, holding the dress of the woman, "tell me, why am I thus persecuted? What have I done that thus illegally I should be detained?"

"You have committed the crime of being a rich man's daughter; and here you must atone for it until you get absolution."

"But leave me not in this dark place alone—this dreary cave. I feel afraid to move."

"There is nothing here will hurt you. In half an hour, or less, you will be restored to your room."

"No—no!" said Isabella, with an imploring voice; "there is some deed of darkness to be committed. I pray you, good woman, do not commit the deed."

“Bless you,” said her gaoler, “your death would be the greatest calamity that could happen. Your life is worth thousands and thousands. You are placed here merely that no such calamity should occur. I must not further trifle with time. Sit down on those dry rushes. Believe this a church, and say your prayers. Hark! I hear my daughter’s voice. Hush!” and she extinguished the light—“keep where you are, and again I warn you that no harm shall happen.”

A dead silence ensued. Isabella felt convinced that she had a companion in the woman; but she was mistaken. The cave was well known to her, and she retreated cautiously.

Not many minutes had elapsed before Isabella heard the voices of men in a contrary direction to that by which she had entered. One seemed louder than the rest, and it cheered on a dog. “Seek him—seek him, good Carlo,” she heard distinctly; “seek him, and my revenge shall be satisfied!”

The voices came closer; but there was no gleam of light; and Isabella was aware that she sat at the termination of the cave, and separated from those who seemed keenly bent

on pursuing some person. She rose from the rushes and felt the cave, following carefully round, in such a manner that she could regain her position. But there was no opening; still the voices were apparently closer. "Hist—hist!" said Isabella, in a low voice, wishing to draw the attention of the woman who had led her to the cave. There was no answer. "Say, madam, are you here? For Heaven and the blessed Virgin's sake, speak!" The silence remained undisturbed.

"My child—my child!" shouted the voice.

As if inspired by a conviction that she was the object sought, she called, with the shrill voice of a woman, "I am here—I am here! Rescue me—rescue me!" Scarce had she uttered the words, when she felt herself rudely seized by a strong arm.

"How!" said a man, "have you so little value for a life so well worth preserving, that you risk its loss for a day's liberty? But that more depends upon your life, than revenge would be gratified by your death, your father should find you a corpse, and your dying shrieks should lead him to this spot."

"Spare me—spare me!" said the unfortunate



Isabella. "I could not control the desire of being liberated from this dreadful cave."

"Dreadful! Have you never been in the dark before? What is there dreadful in a dry cave? Hark how you have led on the dogs! There—your voice is recognised by that Benvenuto, who thinks he can find the passage."

"It is she—it is she, good Count. I would swear to her voice amid a million. This way it came."

"No," said another, "it was further in this direction. Seek, good Carlo—seek. The dog will give us warning if we are right."

"Call to her, good Count."

"Isabella—Isabella, it is your father calls! Answer me, child, and your rescue is sure."

"Do you feel this sharp point against your neck, fair lady? Raise but your voice one note above a whisper, and your moments are numbered. Ah, the dog may sniff, and the men may search, but you are a safe prisoner, and I a safe fugitive."

"Now if I were in the light I would do it, and brave all, even your strength!" And she searched for the dagger which had preserved

her Konigsmark's life from the bull, and which she ever wore about her.

“ This way, fair lady. You tremble, as that hoarse Captain shouts your name. If your desire is so ripe for shrieking, you shall be gratified. Now, you still hear your father's voice—answer it ; by my honour, which is a stricter bond to me than your oath is to you, I will not harm you. Call, and say you are here.”

Isabella, fearful of the stiletto, shrieked, and breaking from the hold of Vergani, advanced at random. She soon felt herself against the cave ; and, with a heart beating fearfully, and with a tremulous clutch of the dagger, she awaited the touch of Vergani to direct her aim. How different did she then feel from what she did when her love-lighted eyes saw the impending danger of her lover, and animated her with superhuman strength and courage to strike the deadly blow. Her own life, though so well worth preserving, never gave her half the resolution ; and in the dark, striking at random against one whose name was a marvel, and whose deeds were on every tongue, whose courage, strength,

skill, activity, and resolution, made him more than a match for those of double his muscular power, she held her heart to check its beating, which she imagined she heard distinctly ; then, with the cleverness of her sex, she knew that Vergani would come slowly along the cave in search of her ; she therefore walked forward with timid step, until she felt assured that there was ample space for a man to pass between her and the boundary of the cave.

All was silent. In vain she listened for the slightest movement. Her heart beat fearfully quick ; but her courage, with the emergency of the case, mounted at every pulsation. At last, she overpowered the feeling, and stood like a tigress, prepared to face the worst. She held the dagger firmly in her grasp, keeping her arms folded, to occupy the less space. The voices, still heard, became fainter in the distance, until at last not a sound reached the ear. Still, awfully still, was the moment. The eyes, though opened, were useless—the very breath of life was carefully drawn—not a limb was moved—and even the very wink of the eyelids seemed fraught with peril—useless precautions against imaginary danger.

Vergani enticed her to shriek, in order to draw the attention of the Count from the only place where the communication existed; and when she broke from him in one direction, Vergani took the other, and, familiar with every turn of the cave, he left her to her fears, and now was heard, apparently far off, imitating a female's voice, and calling, "Father, father! save me, save me!" She at once comprehended the cheat which had been put upon her, and replacing her dagger, gave a deep, deep sigh.

Vergani had been watched, as was mentioned. Benvenuto had been apprised by the Chief of the Police that he must accompany the Count, who, with an armed party, went in pursuit of the daring smuggler. A large reward was offered for his capture; and Benvenuto could identify him. They had ridden round to the point where the boat had landed, and, in searching near the place, a small cave was discovered. It was instantly supposed that this was the place of concealment, and, with eagerness, the party followed their anxious leader. The cave, like the Cretan Labyrinth, seemed interminable; and frequently, after pursuing a path hewn out with care, and which

betrayed marks that not long since it had been visited, they came to the place at which they had entered. Once they had arrived close to the place of Isabella's concealment,—her shriek had made them take the wrong turning ; and Vergani's imitative voice had led them into another part, which conducted again to the opening.

This watching the boat and arming the men was known, as soon as it was done, to Vergani's confederate, who, sharing in all enterprises, was not likely to betray him. A faithful man of the gang was sent to the cottage. The whistle apprised Vergani that he was required,—the second, that the danger was imminent. In a moment, his resolution was taken. More of his gang were ordered to the wood ; and the Count and his party were watched. At last, they emerged from the cave, and, overcome with fatigue, threw themselves on the beach. Now they were an easy capture ; but Vergani never shed blood if he could avoid it and be safe. His revenge was keen against the men he had most injured—the Count and Benvenuto. Calling to his confederate, he gave him some hurried orders, and striking through the wood, was



soon far away, and on the road to the Count's chateau.

Isabella, worn out with fatigue, fear, hunger, and, worse than all, blighted hope, fell down almost exhausted; and, dreading the future malice of Vergani, and having sealed perhaps her own ruin, she became again a woman, and burst into a flood of tears.

## CHAPTER VII.

It was noon. The Count sat in his room, anxiously watching the clock; the pendulum vibrated, and the monotonous sound of the tick continued. In the room adjoining, two men were stationed; around his house, carefully concealed, were others of the police; and by his side, his face glowing with indignation and hatred, sat Benvenuto. The worthy Captain was long ere he could accept the invitation of the Count to be seated, and his eyes kept examining the room—now surveying the gilded cornices, now wondering at a marble table. He held his hands one in the other, as if afraid some awkwardness of the limbs, if allowed to be at liberty, might be prejudicial to the fur-

niture. The quarter struck, and the Count broke the silence.

“He comes not—his hour is passed.”

“And I doubt, Mister Count, if he will come at all. It was the worst generalship—saving your presence—hunting him up, when he was coming of his own accord, I ever heard tell of. It’s an even wager if he and your daughter are not half way to Calabria before this.”

“If he is,” said the Count, “the police of Naples are not worth a rush. The boat was destroyed—the road in every direction watched.”

“Vergani cares little for boats being burnt, or roads being watched, especially when half the men employed are in his pay. I have known him attend a trial, when the evidence was such as would have condemned him, if he had been a prisoner. I have known him prompt the lawyer; and myself was present when he gave the clearest evidence that he himself was at that moment one hundred leagues off. I’ll be bound he knows as well as you do, Mister Count—and I beg your pardon for thus expressing myself before you—how many men you have got here—where they are—and all their names.”

“Impossible,” said the Count. “Hark! Nettuno is growling; it is he.”

“I’d wager half of Barcelona against a dinner of macaroni, that it’s not Vergani, or any one belonging to him!”

“The dog grows fierce,” said the Count, “and yesterday was quiet when Vergani approached. See, there he walks to the door.”

“It’s one of the lazzaroni he has contrived to rouse into sufficient activity to come thus far. Well may they call him St. José; none but a saint could do that.”

The old maid brought in a letter; it was clumsily folded, and seemed to have been carelessly written. She said “a strange man—certainly not the gentleman who called yesterday—had brought it.”

The Count took the letter. It began thus: “Vergani to the Count de Meraviglia. When I pledge my honour, I never forfeit my word. Is it just and honourable, when a bargain is made, to seek the life of one of the parties?—does not the agreement make both sacred?—is it not like an honourable hostage? I could have killed you yesterday; you were once within reach of my stiletto. I spared you,



because I had agreed to communicate with you this day at noon. Your daughter heard your voice, and I made her answer it. Where is she *now*? You cannot blame me. Had you not visited the police—had I not been watched, surrounded, pursued—and had I not heard, ‘Seek him, and my revenge shall be satisfied!’ your daughter would have been with you now. Our compact is broken; your daughter’s fate is not yet decided; she may remain my servant, or a duke’s mistress. Let Benvenuto beware! José Vergani loves a former friend for a foe: he was to have had half your reward. He shall not share in the price of her infamy; that would be a sin for so honourable a man; and I will have no partner in crime. I give you one more chance. If the ransom is increased one hundred scudi—if the Count Meraviglia to-morrow makes oath before the figure of St. Francisco, in the church of Santa Maria di Piedigrotta, or before the sacred Virgin, where, on the 8th September each year, the king and royal family kneel and worship, that he will learn to be a Christian, and forget his revenge—that the money be brought by himself to the cave, where yesterday he fool-

ishly thought to entrap his foe—then José Vergani swears that the daughter shall be returned to the father, her identity proved beyond a doubt, and her beauty unimpaired from grief. Vergani answers for no more;—from Benvenuto you can best learn how she became his passenger. You will write an answer by the bearer; and you may encourage him to activity by the application of a stick. Ask him any questions you think proper; but, remember, your reply fixes Isabella's fate."

"Impertinent scoundrel!" said the Count; "does he dare dictate thus? His house shall be destroyed—his wife imprisoned. He shall be hunted from the earth; he shall know no repose; and his execution shall hang over ever minute of his existence. What say you—you who were to have had half the ransom, or shared the price of infamy? You shall glut my revenge, if I fail with this devil, who defies all law."

Benvenuto answered not, and the Count strode through his spacious apartment. "Can you not speak, you spawn of a bad sea?"

"I can speak, and the truth also; and, although poor, can revenge an insult, as I can

be grateful for a good service. I swore to protect this girl, now supposed to be your daughter. Vergani says he can prove her identity. He can prove anything, but an honest man. Go to-morrow to the church of Santa Maria Piedigrotta—swear to forget your revenge, and do so—give the additional one hundred scudi ; or rest assured that Vergani will not want a wife whilst your daughter lives, or a certain duke a handsome mistress. He could have stabbed you, yet he respected you. I feel I am not so likely to escape.

“ And what know you of my daughter? How came she on board your vessel ? ”

“ I know but this. The Count Konigsmark, well known for his desperate bravery at Malta, placed her under my care ; I was to deliver her to Vergani, who was to find her rich father ; and I was to receive half the money paid. You know the rest.”

“ Then, after all, she may not be my daughter ? ”

“ Vergani says she really is so. You have nothing to trust in but the words of a brigand and a smuggler.”

“ I will go ; and I will go unarmed, unat-

tended ; this strange man, who defies all law, seems yet to have a strong notion of honour." As he said this, he wrote two lines—"I agree to the terms. At the appointed hour and place—unarmed, unattended—on my honour, I will await you."

The lazzaroni was dispatched, the police were dismissed, and Benvenuto, with sorrowful countenance, rose to depart.

"You fear for your life?" said the Count ; "if so, wait here, and be in safety."

"It is only prolonging my misery. Unless I can get to my ship (and then I am not safe even from my own crew), my death is certain. The spirit of Vergani is behind every tree ; he sees with a thousand eyes ; his strength is in the arms of a multitude. I pray you may be satisfied that Isabella is your daughter, and that the cloud which settled over your house may pass away, and leave only the clear and sun-bright sky of old age."

"You shall not go alone ; I will accompany you."

"It would be only giving you another painful scene in life. Farewell."

Meraviglia looked from his window, and saw

the sun-burnt sailor quickly leave his premises. The police had preceded him, and were using their utmost speed to gain Naples before night set in. Not so Benvenuto. Believing in the certainty of Vergani's revenge, and the impossibility of evading it, he resigned himself to his fate; said numerous prayers; but resolved to make such a desperate resistance, even against any odds, that his courage should be respected. He even sang as he walked along; and the more dreary the part, the louder he chanted his merry barcarole. Before him was the lazzarone with the Count's answer; and so leisurely did this man perform the service required of him, that Benvenuto was soon by his side.

"You are not the quickest bearer of a dispatch," began Benvenuto; "'tis of importance, and Vergani awaits you with impatience."

"I may go as leisurely as is my pleasure, or sit down to refresh myself with aqua vita and macaroni, without incurring the displeasure of St. José."

"How so, good man? Did he not desire you to be quick?"

"And did he not receive the answer five minutes after I had it?"



Benvenuto looked round with a certain countenance of awe, and then, with a quivering voice, asked—"And where is he now?"

"You look alarmed, good Capitano Benvenuto!"

The Captain stopped, and stared at the man.

"Take your hand from your stiletto. What have you to fear from me? In spite of your perfidy, you are a good and honest-hearted sailor. Vergani admires the dexterity with which you repaid him. It was all fair; only you may have to say masses for the souls of three or four gentlemen, who, through your intelligence, are as yet, perhaps, alive in the vaulted cellar where your goods were placed. What say you—shall I be the means of reconciliation between you and Vergani? or do you prefer to live for another quarter of an hour his enemy?"

"He made me his enemy, when for years he had been my friend."

"Ay, and dealt honourably with you."

"In all but the last affair."

"It was necessary to remove the girl, even where you should not have known her retreat."



“ But for the share of the ransom ? ”

“ If Vergani had stabbed you, your widow would have received it.”

“ You seem well informed of Vergani’s intention. According to the servant at the Count Meraviglia’s, you were but a lazzarone, and not over communicative.”

“ The evening air and some of the Count’s wine has made me perhaps more active and loquacious. To the point : Are you willing to be Vergani’s friend or his enemy ? ”

“ His friend ! ”

“ Your hand and your oath.”

“ I give both freely.”

“ And I accept them as cordially.”

“ Vergani ! ”

“ Your humble servant ! Thinking I might accidentally be shot by the police, I changed dresses with the lazzarone, who by this time is fast asleep, not far from where you hunted yesterday for me. Come on more quickly, man ; the sun is already down, and the dark shade of night is resting on the trees.”

“ You mentioned some men left in the cave ! ”

“ Yes ; I introduced them, in the most

friendly manner to the empty boxes, and left them there to measure themselves for coffins. If they starve or commit suicide, that is their own affair. As for ourselves, your vessel is clear?—when can you sail?”

“To-night, if requisite.”

“Not so; the offices are shut, and forms must be observed; to-morrow will be time enough; to-night I will ship my goods, money, and men, and to-morrow’s last minute shall see Benvenuto a rich man, with money sufficient to keep his wife and children in affluence. You may either sell me the vessel, or share my fortune elsewhere.”

“I understand, and I will speak freely. I would rather remain at Naples. Give me the fair price of the schooner, and what is honourably my due from this transaction, and I will take the vessel to sea, embark you and yours, where and when you please, and part with you a friend ready at any call.”

“Good; it shall be arranged to-night. We must strike off here, and take the upper path. Hark! the whistle—these honourable people are on the alert, and I must go anywhere but

home. Do you think the Count will come to the rendezvous ?”

“ Certain.”

“ And pay ?”

“ Every farthing.”

“ And become a good Christian, and forget his revenge ?”

“ That is doubtful.”

“ We had better part here. Your hand again. Will you be true, and keep the secret of my plans and projects ? Swear by the Holy Virgin and St. Francisco.”

“ Ay, and by St. José.”

“ Go to your vessel ; before long you shall hear from me ; and mark, the man who brings you this ring will speak and act for me. Good night !”

At one bound, Vergani gained a narrow path, and struck into a lonely part of the suburbs. A shrill whistle was heard on the right hand, and Benvenuto continued on the public road, vainly endeavouring to discern any one, although it was evident he was watched, and that Vergani’s men were on the alert. It was dark when he arrived on board his vessel.

The lazzaroni dress was a sufficient disguise for Vergani ; a man at once desperately courageous, ready in resources, quick at invention, and determined in action, his life had been one continued adventure ; and so nearly had the toils of the law been twined round him, so many a time had the net been spread, and the lure used for his capture, and so very often had he escaped, even when escape appeared almost impossible, that he had grown bold upon his success, and had often entered the police office, and given evidence in favour of himself. At this moment, he felt inclined to risk his precious person, and glean some intelligence ; and, having entered a miserable abode, he in a few moments came forth again dressed as a man who hires out curriculos, and who stands behind to flagellate the horse.

There was a bustle in the street, and it required no personal observation of the prisoner to recognise Benvenuto, whose voice convinced his friend that he was a captive. Poor Benvenuto was hustled rudely by his guards ; and, although he swore most fervently that he was not Vergani, or anything like him, in shape or make, he was hurried along and placed before

the chief—a crush of the people followed the prisoner's entrance, and in that rush Vergani was safely conveyed into the hall of justice ; there also was Vergani's wife, and the question to be decided was, if Benvenuto, or any other person there, was Vergani or not ; the prisoners who had been confined in the cave had been liberated by Benvenuto, who, before he went on board his vessel, recommended the wife of Vergani to aid in the captives' liberation. This she refused ; never meddling, as she wisely remarked, with her husband's affairs ; but a man who acted as wine-drawer, undertook to release them at Benvenuto's suggestion ; and now that good-natured man, the wife, and Benvenuto were all respectively charged with being concerned with, and under the authority of, the ubiquitous Vergani.

Benvenuto was recognised instantly, and would have been discharged as soon, but for the evidence of one of the men, who declared he watched the prisoner in close conversation with the lazzarone who was entrusted with the letter from Vergani ; and that, being well convinced he was the man to deliver the answer,



he had followed Benvenuto to Vergani's house, and saw him, after speaking to the wife, descend to the cave with the wine-drawer, who, the witness assured the court, was no other than Vergani.

The wine-drawer looked the personification of innocence. "Why, the witness is mad!" he said; "Vergani is neither tall nor short, fat nor slim, whilst I am notoriously small, with an inclination to be large. If by doing a good action a man is likely to be in a bad position, St. José be my witness that, if your Excellency was in the cave, you might starve before I would release you."

"I should think it nothing more than probable," replied the judge, "that if a villain caught his greatest enemy, he would not be in a hurry to let him go free."

"Just so," replied the wine-drawer; "and it seems especially applicable at this present moment."

The assembled Neapolitans did honour to the reply in a hearty laugh; in the midst of which a clear voice was heard—"Well said, Thomaso!"

Thomaso knew the voice well, and, with the

quickness of one devoted to his master, he looked in another direction.

“Who made that remark?” said the judge, angrily.

“Vergani!” answered a man from quite another part of the hall.

An evident bustle took place, the doors were closed, and the three people imprisoned were placed to survey every person who passed out; and each man of that dense crowd was obliged to walk one by one from the hall of justice.

“At any rate, your Excellency,” said the wine-drawer, “let me out, for it is quite evident I am myself, and no one else.”

“Go,” said the judge, “by that door, which leads to your gaol; you are his servant, and his partner in crime.”

“And your Excellency will not come and release me; it being, as you remarked, not at all probable, that if a villain caught his greatest enemy, he would let him go free.” The man carelessly turned to go, giving a peculiar whistle.

“Let’s look at your face,” said one of the men; “you look like Vergani.”

“By my faith!” said the man, in the peculiar pronunciation of the word in Naples; “you must be ‘ubriaco.’”

“Ay!” replied the man, “that may be; but this dress does not well become you; and the men of the *curriculos* don’t carry rings on their fingers.”

“Then it appears,” replied the man, “that you are not the best judge of dresses and ornaments. Now, look well in my face—Am I your *contrabandiste* or not?”

The bold, easy manner of the man induced another of the three who had been imprisoned to say, “That does not resemble our man at all; let him pass!”

“Ay!” said the *curriculo*; “and mind you look well at every one’s face; this fellow, I suspect, found some full bottles in the cave. Good night, Signor Buonavista! By St. José, you should be employed always to detect smugglers.” The crowd behind pushed forward the man, who, finding himself free from the mob, gave a sharp whistle, and disappeared. Benvenuto retired to his vessel, and on arriving on board, found a man, in a sailor’s dress, in the cabin, quietly helping himself to

some brandy. The captain started back, but the stranger showing a ring, easily recognised as Vergani's, quieted all apprehension.

"To our business, good Benvenuto," said Vergani. "We can arrange it better ourselves than with a third person; and, remember, I am one of your crew."

"Were you in the court?"

"To be sure; and have already sent to free Thomaso. Without him, I cannot embark what I require."

"It will be difficult to release him to-night."

"And is this the remark of one who has lived in Naples? By this time, he is free, and no blood shed. A few scudi would buy all the justice of Naples; and, as for the police, I would wager the value to be received to-morrow, that I would engage every man placed to stop smuggling to carry the goods to their proper destination. They have often carried them for us, and the guards on the quay have kept their eyes towards the sea, whilst we passed behind them with the contraband articles. When Thomaso arrives, you shall hear my plans; in the mean time, fix your price on the vessel."

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE execution of Vratz was followed by the retirement of Konigsmark. The clergyman, faithful to his promise, delivered into the hands of the Count the two hurried lines of his once faithful servant.

Although acquitted by judge and jury, the people of England saw in the Count an accessory before the fact, and the leading man who planned the murder. Under these circumstances, even Konigsmark had not the audacity to visit the court ; but he retired, having again disguised himself, into one of the narrow streets of Westminster, determining to cross to Holland as soon as convenient, and there again offer his hand to the rich widow, not even now fifteen years of age.



In France, matters began to wear a serious aspect. Montague's love—if such a transient passion could be called love—for the Duchess had now taken a decided turn in favour of the daughter ; and this daughter was supposed, even by his sovereign, to be the King's child.

The Duchess of Cleveland was not slow to discover the intrigue, and in her letter to the King makes use of these words : “ As for my Lady Sussex, I hope you will think fit to send for her over, for she is now mightily discoursed of for the Ambassador.” Her suspicions were her spurs to vengeance, and she resolved to hurl Montague from his proud situation.

In the mean time, the soothing words of the Ambassador quenched every spark of suspicion in his wife. Alike proud of his talent, and blinded by excessive affection, her mind was moulded after his fashion, and she saw and thought as he wished her either to see or think. No woman ever more implicitly believed in the words of her husband, than did Montague's ill-used wife. There was a tone of gentleness in his manner when he wished to conceal his purpose, apparently so very natural, that she readily credited every assertion ; he threw

an air of diplomatic necessity about his visits to the Duchess, he made it appear positively requisite to *fête* the King's daughter, and be ceremoniously civil to her mother.

“ I confess,” he said, to his wife, “ it is disagreeable to me, and must be annoying to you ; but consider how capricious is Charles, how easily he could be reconciled to the Duchess, and how anxious he might become to see his natural daughter, the Countess of Sussex. Generally the Duchess sends her letters through me, and I, of course, avail myself of my position to see that nothing passes which might compromise us, taking care to send a strong antidote to the poison.”

“ But, my dear Montague, the scandal of the court here cannot be long concealed ; and often when I have heard those old and wizened *debauchées*, who hang about the Grand Monarque, and who yet linger in the sunshine of beauty, saying aloud, that the ambassador's mistress looked well,—although the words strike deep in a heart solely and wholly yours, I cannot but tremble lest such gossip might reach our sovereign's ears.”

“ And it would signify little if it did, under

existing circumstances," said Montague ; " but his daughter's fame would be a more serious concern."

" They say, Montague, that latterly your attentions have been much directed in that quarter."

" And with truth," said the ready diplomat. " For, seeing that she was surrounded by flatterers, and men who care little to violate the peace and happiness of a family, I threw myself in the field, and by keeping close to her, and using my assumed right as her protector, drove away the others, or, at any rate, made them respect what they were anxious to destroy. It is the misery of greatness," said Montague, with a smile, " to attract the attention of all the idle and the frivolous."

" I am sure," replied the Countess, " that, if grandeur has its pleasures, insignificance has its enjoyments. The very surveillance which is practised renders my existence almost hateful. I cannot walk, but I am noticed—I cannot move, but I am watched—I cannot speak, but my words are weighed—if I smile, it has a political meaning ; and if I am low-spirited—and oh, Montague, indeed, indeed, I would never

appear so in your society—then my husband's intrigues are assigned as the cause. 'Un-easy sleeps the head which wears a crown,' Shakespeare says, and well I have experienced all the annoyance of a painful pre-eminence."

"Life, my dear, is made up of these little inconveniences ; but since all are, more or less, animated by ambition, I see no reason why we should not occupy the highest seat. Any man may fall, but the ascent to greatness and distinction is difficult."

"Well, I know you will chide me for it, but I would rather live alone with you in the country, and hear your praises, and blessings invoked upon you by our countrymen, than live here the wife of an ambassador, and hear the whispers of envy and jealousy, and the louder voice of detraction."

"My dear, if I lived in the country, I should see a gallows in every tree. How men of talent, with whom conversation becomes the vehicle of knowledge, can live amongst cows and sheep, and find music in a shepherd's pipe, is to me inconceivable. To rise every morning to see the same view—to waste existence in cutting drains, or imagining rustic seats—

to wear out the day in arranging disputes—to be annoyed by one's neighbours, and bored by one's friends—is a picture sufficiently striking of that 'retreat, retirement, rural quiet,' as sure to keep me from the country as a scarecrow is to keep birds from the corn."

"And yet I look forward to such retreat, retirement, and rural quiet, as a reward for all I have suffered amongst the busy hum of men."

"God help me!" said Montague to himself, "the woman is going mad." Then aloud, he continued, "If you, my darling, so set your heart upon it, your wish must be gratified."

"Only with you, Montague—only with you. To me it is a happiness to dream that the time might come, when, seated by our quiet fire-side, far removed from all the insincerity of the world, you would beguile the time by reading aloud some new work of interest, whilst I worked at my embroidery, or, when you were for a moment melancholy, to cheer you with a song. Oh, what happiness it seems, and yet far—far too distant!"

"If we were buried together in the same grave, I should think such recreation rather



worse than the solitude," murmured Montague. And then he said, aloud, "Quite beautiful!—quite delightful! It makes me almost wish to resign."

The Countess rose from her chair, and throwing her arms round her husband's neck, imprinted a warm and affectionate kiss on his lips, saying, "How kind—how very kind you are, my dear Montague!"

"And always, I hope, shall so remain. It is seldom, my dear, we have time for such delightful conversation—and this has cheered me for the moment. Then, again, comes the cloud of to-morrow; I have asked the Duchess and her daughter to dine here."

"What, again, dear Montague? Surely we need not make the embassy an hotel—it was but yesterday they dined here."

"True—true, my dear. But in the Duchess's letter I remarked something which I must manage to efface. Believe me, dearest, these reunions are to me the penance of my office, but they are necessary."

"If your Excellency would spare a moment," said Colonel Brett, "I have something of import to communicate."

“Excuse me, dearest, for a short time. I shall return with all convenient speed, to resume our pleasant prospects of the future.”

“Now, Brett, what new wonder is this?” said the Ambassador, rubbing his hands, and congratulating himself that, under the appearance of the Duchess, he had the prospect of a delightful evening with the young Countess.

“Konigsmark has murdered Mr. Thynne.”

“The *farceur*!” replied Montague, with a smile.

“Had him shot by the very man who accompanied him to Paris.”

“That man will make a considerable figure in the world if he removes obstacles so easily. Of course the assassin will be cheered with hopes of pardon, until the cord is around his neck. Now we may turn him to some account.”

“I had the good fortune to enjoy the same idea. Konigsmark has the command of a cavalry regiment here, and I have no doubt that he will soon be amongst us. The Lady Elizabeth is in Holland; if we could but entice her here, the marriage might be arranged.”

“Ah! the report that the Countess arranged

for money the match with Thynne would be fatal—but we can try. Perhaps, we may assure her that, in the calm solitude of St. Germain, she may weep over her second widowhood for a week, and, as it happened before, by the end of the year she may become the Countess Konigsmark.”

“The Count will not, this time, stand out for ten or twenty thousand. He knows by experience how soon such a prize is captured when hundreds are in pursuit of her—so young, so easily advised and led.”

“You are right, Brett; and I am, of course, her best friend and adviser. I will make the Countess write, and place all our establishment in mourning. I never liked that Thynne—he was a fool, and dazzled only with a setting sun. He should have lent the King money.”

“But he was Monmouth’s friend!”

Montague cast a satirical glance at the Colonel, as he replied, “Have men *ever* friends in adversity?”

“I fear, your Excellency,” continued Brett, affecting not to notice the remark, “that the Countess of Northumberland will sadly grieve over her daughter’s second widowhood.”

“It will give her a pretence to shut her doors against the Duchess of Cleveland.”

“And,” added Brett, with consummate calmness, “also against the Countess of Sussex.” There was silence for a moment. Brett’s countenance remained unchanged, and Montague’s piercing eyes and guilty conscience both warned him how truly that arrow had hit the mark.

“Shall I inform the Countess, and spare your Excellency the disagreeable task?”

“Brett,” said Montague, as he laid his hand familiarly on his shoulder, “you ought to be an ambassador.”

“I feel very grateful for the compliment; your Excellency can hardly place my talents on a level with your own.”

“We must not inform the Countess of this news until after to-morrow. I have a reason, Brett.”

“Perhaps your Excellency is apprehensive that the house may be shut up too soon?” Brett was annoyed at the remark concerning friendship in adversity, knowing that Montague never believed in the existence of a sound friendship, and considered all men, like him-

self, influenced solely by interested motives and the hope of wealth. Brett was another instance of the danger of familiarity with inferiors. He was quite aware of the Ambassador's new intrigue, and wished now to make himself of more importance in the necessity of buying his silence.

"You are right, Brett; you are always right. I particularly wish to soothe the Duchess of Cleveland."

"It is a very natural wish, your Excellency. A woman neglected is a fierce enemy, and the preference of a daughter's charms to her own is seldom forgiven."

"You speak in riddles, Brett. What can you mean?"

"Merely that very few mothers would forgive the man who, having intrigued with them, kindly takes the daughter under protection."

"Hush, man!—hush! Neither of us is deaf. You need not bawl like a Caliban of a sailor in a storm."

"I spoke lower than usual, your Excellency."

"It seemed to me louder."



“ Perhaps, because the subject was interesting, and the facts acknowledged.”

“ Why, it is all a mere court slander. In this city, the characters of ambassadors and priests seem public property ; and women’s reputations are whispered away without remorse, and without reason ; besides, the thing is absurd. The marriage of the Countess was never consummated, on account of her tender age ; and to fix an intrigue on a child is absurd.”

“ Your Excellency takes the strong side of the question ; it is on account of the utter impossibility of such a thing that men like to talk of it.”

“ Of course, no one credits it?”

“ Only the Duchess herself, I believe.”

“ You *believe*, Brett?”

“ Yes, your Excellency. I believe ; and I much doubt if she would bear out your expression, and prove ‘ that men never have friends in adversity.’ ”

“ You seem nettled, Brett, at that remark. You would be an exception.”

“ I have no doubt of your Excellency’s honour.”

“Come, Brett, come; no more of that asperity. Let us talk of other matters. Both you and I may make a better thing of the Swede than we did of Lord Ogle, or than the Countess is reported to have made by Thynne. Let us arrange that matter. We must somehow bring them together.”

“It would require much thought,” said Brett, doggedly. “Konigsmark is suspected of the murder; and if the widow hear of this, she will not readily consent to meet him.”

“His acquittal is sufficient. Cannot we bewilder the brain of a girl of fifteen—especially where she is predisposed to hear everything that is good, and to receive with difficulty all that is bad, of a man she likes? It would answer well in more ways than one. Bringing the Countess’s daughter here will keep out the Duchess; and whilst these rumours are so much abroad, the less she is here the better. It would be an excuse, you remark, Brett, for closing the embassy. We will all go into deep mourning, and in France, you know, people neither go into society nor receive during the first months of grief. Come, Brett; we will make a fair division of whatever we

can get. Do you undertake the Swede. It is easy to persuade him to come to France; and the Countess will write the day after to-morrow, to Holland, to urge her daughter to visit her. And, my dear Brett, as neither you nor I are likely to be in adversity, we shall never have to test our friendship under the extreme touch-stone."

"I will do my best, your Excellency, and write forthwith to Konigsmark."

"I have a favour to ask of you, Brett. I am most anxious this letter should be given to the Countess of Sussex. It is merely an excuse for my apparent neglect; for, since such rumours are rife—and I will not disguise to you, that I have heard them myself—I am anxious she should clearly understand my reasons for absenting myself a little from her society. I find great difficulty, from the foolish suspicion of the mother, in gaining an opportunity to convey to the daughter any letter; but as you are admitted, and receive from the Duchess her letters to the king, you may find an opportunity of slipping this unperceived into the Countess's hand. You may place it in any book on the table, taking care to let her see you do it.

You can convey the meaning by a glance. But I grow old, and am in my dotage, in giving these hints to one who is himself so eloquent in all affairs of women, and so fortunate in their admiration."

Brett was taken in his weak point, and apparently without premeditation on the part of the speaker. His countenance brightened at the compliment, and he received the letter. Montague was not slow to perceive the change, and continued—"Lucky fellow, Brett; the Countess of Macclesfield is not a woman to admire every man; nor her husband to admit every person to his house. They tell me the Earl is more pleased with the raciness and poetry of your conversation after dinner than with that of any other man. Ah, Brett! I believe you blend Anacreon and Ovid, and either below, at the festive board, or in the quiet of the ladies' boudoir, reign pre-eminent."

Flattery is sweet to every man; few can resist that poison dropped artfully; few can rise superior to the words of the charmer. Our vanity and pride are ever ready to assist the speaker; and humpbacked men believe themselves Apollos, and crooked women,

Graces, when the "leperous distilment" assails the porches of the ear. Brett, who knew Montague thoroughly, could not resist the charms of flattery. The very idea that he could succeed in sapping the affections of the Countess of Macclesfield, was in his estimation most gratifying; but he recovered himself as he said, "I fear, my Lord Rivers is no despicable rival."

"The greater the rival, the greater the stimulus to overcome the obstacle. One of your boldness, of your address, need not fear the repulse of any woman. You will deliver the letter, Brett, and write this day to Konigsmark. Give him to understand that the king has inquired about him; say the regiment of horse is impatiently awaiting its commander; and accidentally, as it were, let slip that Thynne's widow is about to pass the winter in Paris. I need not instruct one so intimately acquainted with the hearts of women; but it is worth our while, be assured; and when you have done this, do not forget the Lady Sussex."

Brett, who, like his master, was the slave of money, readily concocted a seducing letter to Konigsmark, which was directed to the Swedish



Minister, and forwarded. He then proceeded to the Countess of Sussex, who, with her mother, occupied a splendid rez-de-chaussée, in the Rue St. Honoré. The words which had given offence to Brett still seemed rankling in his mind; and, as he reasoned with himself, he could not see how in any manner they applied to him. Yet he felt as if the manner of Montague's expression had somewhat wounded him, and he knew the adage—"So live with friends, as if you might be foes." It appeared as if he said, "You are willing enough to be my friend in prosperity, but if the cold blast of adversity came, you, like the rest of the world, would go to the worship of another ascendant star." Musing on these words, and always giving them the blackest intention, the secretary passed from the Faubourg St. Germain through the gardens of the Tuileries, until he arrived at the house of the Duchess of Cleveland.

## CHAPTER IX.

NEVER since her arrival in Paris had the Duchess of Cleveland received a visit from Brett ; she had met him frequently at the Embassy, but they seldom exchanged many words. In all the interviews, whether at receptions or at dinners, Brett seemed to play the part of purveyor of pleasure to the Countess of Northumberland, and was evidently instructed in the rôle by Montague, it being his object to keep his wife well engaged, whilst he carried on his intrigue with the discharged mistress of his sovereign. An excuse from one so well versed as Brett could not be long wanted, and he was ushered into the apartments of the Duchess.

He was prepared to see what met his eye—a room furnished in the height of Parisian ele-

gance ; he therefore never chronicled in his memory the splendid fauteuils, the candelabra, and the thousand minor elegances and luxuries which crowd a well appointed room. The Duchess was not in the apartment ; and Brett's eye fell upon a letter addressed to his sovereign. As, in all probability, that letter would be read at the Embassy, he turned his attention to a portrait of the Duchess in her younger days, before she became the wife of Mr. Palmer.

It would have arrested a colder man than Brett. Never had the painter's art given more life to beauty than in that exquisite portrait—it was still the image of the Duchess. The beaming eye, the pouting lip, the freshness and the glow of youth and animation, the swelling bosom, and the lovely figure, all contributed to arrest Brett ; and in his admiration of the picture, he forgot his discretion as an agent.

Once he looked round ; there was nobody but a servant, who informed him that the Duchess was at her toilette, and in a few minutes would avail herself of the unexpected pleasure of the visit.

In order to deliver the note to the Countess without the embarrassment of searching a

pocket, the note of the Ambassador was concealed in Brett's left hand ; and now, planted before the portrait of the Duchess, Brett scanned every feature, surveyed every grace, and, in the absence of mind occasioned by the all-absorbing portrait, he played with the note between both his hands, which he held behind him. Here was beauty a thousand-fold more enticing than Lady Macclesfield ; and there was a fascination in the eyes which followed every movement of his, which riveted him to the spot. By the side of this portrait there was one of an inferior artist, intended for the Countess of Sussex. The limner had been well instructed, and seemed to have drawn the girl with a portrait of the king before him ; and this was purposely done, that the Duchess might show his majesty the resemblance, and plant in his mind the certainty of the paternity.

Brett was struck with the similitude ; but again riveted his eyes on the Duchess, feasting upon the luxuriance of the display ; and, allowing his imagination to sport with his feelings, he became motionless with admiration ;

and such was his abstraction, that the Duchess entered the room unperceived and unnoticed.

The homage paid to her former beauty was not disagreeable to her. She advanced cautiously ; when suddenly remarking a note in Brett's hand, and recognising Montague's hand-writing, her quick eye detected its destination. Instantly a thousand painful thoughts flashed across her. Brett's visit—the smallness of the note—and Montague's unusual absence on the day when it was his custom to call to receive her letters, suggested a multiplicity of conjectures. As carefully as she had entered, she withdrew to the door, which opened into the boudoir, and then, speaking to the Countess, she mentioned aloud her intention of driving to Versailles in the evening.

The voice recalled Brett to himself ; the note was instantly concealed, and the obedient friend of the Ambassador bowed to the original of the portrait with all possible respect.

“ His Excellency,” he began, “ has desired me to wait upon your Grace for any letters you may wish to send to England. Owing to a



slight controversy with the government here, his Excellency is so engaged, that he is himself unable this morning to pay his personal respects."

Brett delivered his opening speech with all the coldness of a Lord Chancellor reading that of his Sovereign at the opening of Parliament; and when his eyes met those of the Duchess, the recollection of the picture flashed across him, and flushed his countenance. The Duchess was still beautiful; and in her eyes was that soft voluptuousness which the painter had faithfully depicted on the canvas.

"Pray be seated, Colonel." The Duchess pointed to a chair.

The room had a variety of looking-glasses; the one over the mantel-piece was large and costly; opposite to it was another of equal size; whilst two others, also opposite to each other, gave the room an apparently interminable extension. And, again, other glasses were so disposed, that every motion of a person in the room was visible in one opposite to which the Duchess sat.

"I grieve much not to see his Excellency to-day. I presume the pension paid to Charles

is somewhat in arrear. The Grand Monarque, so lavish of his subjects' gold on some occasions, seems inclined to retract his promise."

"I am uninformed, Madame la Duchesse," replied Brett, "on these points; indeed, his Excellency is the depository of his own secrets, and seldom extends his confidence to any."

At this moment, the Countess of Sussex entered, with a letter for her husband; and Brett, with the quickness of an experienced performer in such delicate missions, gave her to understand he had the billet-doux.

Artful, quick, and observant, the Countess intimated that she was aware of his intention; and the Duchess, who, apparently absorbed in adding a few lines to her dispatch, looked through her fingers, with which she shaded her eyes, and saw the communication.

Brett rose as the Countess entered, and bowed most distantly and most reservedly.

"Are we not to have the pleasure of seeing his Excellency, mamma, to-day?"

"I fear not, my child," replied the Duchess, with a coolness which contrasted wonderfully with the feelings which rankled within her. Colonel Brett intends himself to be an Amba-

sador, and is giving us the best possible display of his qualification, in withholding from us all information of Mr. Montague's occupation, leaving us to form our own conjectures.

"I am uninformed upon the subject, which I have no doubt his Excellency thought me unworthy to share ; but I left him in deep thought, and writing a letter of some consequence to his Majesty."

"Pray, Colonel, since you are thus far communicative, can you tell me if Mr. Montague writes often to the king?"

"Only, your Grace, I apprehend, when the subject is of vast importance."

"Ah, then to-day he has received some intelligence of such a nature. I read in your manner that you are not a newspaper, Colonel ; and, therefore, with your permission, I will finish this letter. Pray, do not allow my rudeness to interrupt any conversation with the Countess. What think you of her picture?"

"I like it not in comparison with that of her mother. Lely has most faithfully transferred your Grace to the canvas."

"It is much flattered," said her Grace, without looking up.

“That were impossible,” replied Brett ; “but I think the artist has not done justice to the Countess of Sussex ; although the resemblance is somewhat striking.”

“They say,” remarked the Countess, who really spoke innocently, “that my portrait much resembles the king.”

“There is a great likeness, especially to the prints.”

“We have one or two here in that portfolio, if you desire to make a closer comparison. Show the Colonel, my dear, those on the other table.

The Countess and Brett opened the huge book—the Colonel was nearest the Duchess—and after turning over some leaves, with the right hand, he held the cover with that hand, so as to shield his operations from the Duchess, and, with the left, allowing the Countess to see him, he dropped the note between the prints. The treacherous looking-glasses betrayed every action ; and the flushed cheek of the Countess witnessed her alarm at the clandestine communication now confided to a third person. She felt as if she were somewhat compromised ; but concluded that Montague had

not so acted without sufficient reason. She did not dare to take it before the Colonel, who, seeing her embarrassment, and comprehending it, closed the book, remarking that the resemblance was certainly strong.

The moment the book was closed, the Duchess called her daughter, and bade her carefully close the letters; she then called Brett, and made him survey the picture of herself.

“La beauté de diable—that of youth,” remarked the Duchess, “lasts but a year or two; and I am astonished at my own weakness in allowing the charms of youth to mark the decay of nature.”

“It is a faithful portrait. Well might we say with the poet—

‘————— here, in her hair,  
The painter plays the spider; and has woven  
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men.’

Of a truth, madam, I may say, the picture seems alive; the statue of Pygmalion starting into existence has hardly more of life in it. I could gaze at it for ever.”

“Whilst the original grows old, neglected, haggard, and forgotten, and sinks into her



grave—a prey to anguish and remorse.” There was a deep feeling in the utterance of the words, and to relieve them, Brett added—

“As yet, madam, you cannot quarrel with time. One so universally admired cannot but feel assured that a few years have added to, rather than detracted from, her beauty.”

“It is the difference, Colonel, of the bud and the blossom; as for the latter, the least rain-drop of sorrow, or the cold breeze of neglect, is sufficient to wither it into a miserable stalk! I cannot bear to look at it; it reminds me too much of all the sunny hours of youth and happiness, when I knew no care and experienced no sorrow.”

“Your Grace,” said Brett, smiling, “does not carry upon your features any mark of such uncomfortable companionship.”

The Duchess had turned away, and her eyes were suffused with tears: she recovered herself instantly. “My dear child,” she said, addressing her daughter, “are the letters closed? The Colonel’s time is as precious as Mr. Montague’s, and we must not entangle him in courteous speeches, drawing from him many compliments, and leaving him to certain re-

proaches—not only of his conscience, but of his Excellency.”

“I pray you, Madam, dispose of my time freely; my best excuse to save me from reproach is in acknowledging that I was detained for your despatches.”

“Pray, receive them; and as I shall see his Excellency at dinner, I will not further endeavour to draw from you the secret which now so much engrosses his time and attention.”

“I shall deliver the message faithfully.” The Colonel bowed gracefully, and took his leave.

“He is a man of much manner, mamma,” said the Countess.

“Pshaw, child! what know you of men and manners? He is as good in behaviour as the many thousands we meet with; but he is hard of feature, and his remarks are those of one tutored by an experienced master: they flow not naturally; and he seems for ever endeavouring to remember the right turn of the expressions. Go, child, and finish the drawing you were about; I am anxious to show it to the Countess of Northumberland to-night.”

“ Indeed, my dear mamma, I feel but little inclined.”

“ If I were only to see you at work when prompted by inclination, child, half an hour would be sufficient. Go—go ; I have a letter to write, and would be alone.”

“ I can draw here, mamma, better than in your boudoir, and I hate being alone.”

“ Then, bring your picture into this room ; perhaps the light is better.”

The Countess left the door open, and was not absent a moment. The mother was convinced that she had seen the note placed, and the Countess dreaded lest, by any accident, a detection should take place.

“ Now, child,” the Duchess continued, “ you can talk and paint at the same time, and my letter will not hinder me from being a good listener. What think you of Mr. Montague ?”

The name brought the blood into the young cheek of the Countess. She could not control the sudden impulse ; she felt the guilty mark upon her face, and she hesitated before she answered. Her mother’s watchful eye on the mirror convinced her that she had struck the

right chord, which fearfully vibrated through her daughter.

“He is a very agreeable man,” replied the Countess; “quick in his manner and his remarks; always lively in conversation; and, for a companion, the most agreeable in existence.”

“For a description drawn off-hand by a young lady of fifteen, that is not bad,” said the Duchess, with a smile; “and when you are alone, my dear, on what does this dangerous fascinator discourse?”

“Of various things. His interview sometimes with the French king—the strange people of the court—the remarks of French wits—the paint and the patches of the women—their dress, manners, customs, &c.; he blends them all together, making a most delightful *mélange*, as piquant as it is pert.”

“Then you like his society?”

“Very much, mamma; he speaks so differently from others. He never eulogizes my dress, or bores me with the weather; and, although he is liberal in his compliments to myself, he never vouchsafes such idle nonsense on my *couturière*.”

“Yesterday, when you drove in his carriage, did he speak of his visit to England?”

“What carriage? I never drove with him in his carriage.”

“That is an equivocation, child, which I little admire. If he drove in yours, or you in his, it is of no consequence—the world would set the same value on the act.”

“He draws a great distinction; for a lady to be in *his* carriage somewhat compromises the lady;—so, my dear mamma, I advise you to be more careful for the future;—but for a lady to take a gentleman into hers, that is nothing—positively nothing.”

“You are a pert girl; it is not thus a child should address a parent. I have told you of this, because I have heard your name coupled with that of Montague; and his Majesty of England would be ill at ease—considering how much he has ever cared for you—if such reports reached his ears.”

“I wonder why the King shows such a poor child as myself such attention!”

“There is nothing more natural. When I was much about the court, he was pleased to remark your infantine beauty, and it appears



he has never forgotten it. Here, child, take this key; open my gold case upon the toilette table, and under the last division you will find a small portrait; bring it to me quickly."

The Countess took the key, and departed. The dressing-room was the second room beyond the boudoir, and some time would necessarily elapse; but the Countess had not the slightest idea that her mother suspected the correspondence; and, humming a lively air, the beautiful, slight, elegant creature, glided from the room.

In a second the Duchess possessed herself of the note, and concealed it about her person. She did not dare open it, and risk her daughter's return. The guilty parent felt awed even before the guilty daughter. But oh! the pang—the dreadful pang, of finding a rival in one's own child! That child had been well informed by Montague, that her mother was the discarded mistress of the monarch, and that she still ruled him by her charms. This had been the poison instilled into the young and willing ears of the daughter—that the mother had risen to her height and power by the surrender of her charms; and she was taught to conceal

this knowledge of facts, and, by duplicity and apparent ignorance, perfectly blinded her parent. Even the Duchess of Cleveland felt her heart beat strangely; revenge was uppermost in her thoughts, and she cared not for the means, so she gained her ends; besides, she hated the Countess of Northumberland, for that proud woman had received her not as a friend, but as a forced acquaintance.

The picture was one of the Countess, as a child, and it was beautifully executed. Two had been done—one for the king, the father, the other for the mother; and on the back the hair of the parents and child were interwoven. On seeing it, a tear started from the Duchess, and coursed down her cheek, and the daughter, clinging around her, kissed it from her face. With a look of intense agony, the charms of the innocent and beautiful child were surveyed, and a smile of admiration was gradually succeeded by the darkest gloom; until the daughter, fearful of the mother's health, looked imploringly in her face, and said—"Mother, dearest mother, what makes you tremble thus? I never saw you look so dreadful before, or felt you thus agitated!"

“Look,” said the Duchess, in a stern voice—  
“look at this picture!”

“I obey, my mother. It is of myself—at least, so you have told me—when I was about six years of age. Do I resemble it now?”

“In appearance, much. But look you, how innocent is the smile the painter transferred to the ivory—how much of childish virtue is in every look; now, turn you to that looking-glass, and see if your face retains the semblance. Why is that blush of shame suffusing your cheek?”

“It is but a flush of astonishment.”

“See how I forget what you were, in the belief of what you are!” And she trampled the portrait into a thousand pieces. “If I dared, I would curse you; but, as the viper stinging the bosom which nourished you, I will crush you! Leave those fragments.”

“I am only preserving the King’s hair,” replied the Countess, apparently unmoved. “I shall keep that as a remembrance of my father.”

“It is done!—it is done!” the Duchess ejaculated. “The secret has been betrayed, and all my worst apprehensions rise before me in truth. What a fearful example I have set this

poor child, now treading in my steps! It is my fault—I am alone to blame!” And, throwing her arms around her, she implored her forgiveness.

The Countess of Sussex, a perfect adept in female dissimulation, affected to be overpowered at this feverish exhibition, but to be entirely ignorant of the cause. “Sit, good mother; here is some perfume; you have written too much, and are wandering in your thoughts. Let me open the window; the air will revive you.”

The Countess of Sussex was at that hour not more than fifteen years of age!

## CHAPTER X.

THE Duchess of Cleveland was alone in her toilette room. It was the hour generally devoted to that art, and the long toil was pursued by her with unceasing exertion. Every feature was set to school—every article of dress fitted with disagreeable exactitude;—it was the penance paid to fading beauty, when the impotence of dress is made the substitute for waning charms. She had dismissed her servant, and now, trembling as if afflicted with the ague, she held the unopened letter in her hand.

As yet, whatever suspicions she had of her child's frailty, she was far from being convinced of the fact. The manner that letter had been conveyed—the idle excuse of Colonel Brett's



visit for her letters, which a servant could as well have carried—the frivolity of the conversation, and the apparent embarrassment of the Secretary—made a thousand suspicions flash into a painful reality. It was the dread of finding her worst fears realized, that kept her wavering in her intentions; the hope that, after all, it might be some girlish indiscretion not amounting to crime—for who could suspect the innocence of fifteen?—got the better of her apprehension; and, drawing her chair closer to the sparkling fire, and placing a light conveniently behind her, she opened the letter.

Before, however, she read one word, she entertained a parley with herself upon the propriety of the act. “Is she not my daughter—my own child—of a tender age, unfit to guide herself? But again, have I not renounced my right to rule or govern her? By her marriage is she not a free and independent woman, responsible only to her husband? But the King—the King—what would he say if I allowed his daughter to pursue an intrigue, and become the scandal of Paris? A word from me may check her in her course—may save her from inevitable destruction—for Montague delights

in the publicity of his acts, and in this immoral age sees no crime in an intrigue.”

Whilst thus the Duchess argued, the Countess had left her room, and, with trembling step and careful eye, entered the saloon. The door leading to the Duchess's room was shut, and not a sound was audible in that direction. With eager haste she opened the huge portfolio, and one by one she removed the several prints. As each one, from the end where the note had been dropped, was taken out, her manner became more agitated—her cheeks flushed—her eyessparkled—her pulseincreased the heaviness and the quickness of its beat; with greater rapidity, as each print destroyed her hope, did she continue to the very last, and then a sudden paleness—a ghost-like whiteness—drove the blush of the cheek, and the vermilion of her lip, from her countenance. She had seen him place the letter there—had herself witnessed its fall amongst the prints—and now it was gone! With the fulness of hope she again moved every print, throwing them at random on the floor; and when that was done, she burst into a flood of tears, and threw herself into a fauteuil, passing her hands

over her eyes, and pressing them heavily against her burning forehead. Suddenly she arose and placed herself on the sofa, where her mother had been seated, and raising her eyes to the glass, she saw that every act could have been seen, and no doubt existed in her mind concerning the removal of the letter. She now knew the worst, and prepared to meet the storm. Retiring to her room, and with a fortitude worthy of a better cause, and a courage which would have made a man a hero, she overcame all girlish fears, mastered every wavering expression of her countenance, and sitting down to undergo the long and painful performances of the coiffeur, read apparently unconcerned from a small book of poetry.

The Duchess, having decided that a parent never lost her authority, unless in direct contradiction to the wish of the husband, considered herself warranted in reading the letter; and, with quick and hurried glance, as if afraid of being discovered in an act she could not entirely reconcile to herself, and agitated with the worst fears as to the discovery she might make, and the apprehensions she might have confirmed, she read as follows:—"My dearest

little pet child—A circumstance of great importance has taken place, and which may somewhat mar our frequent meetings—meetings to me beyond all imagination most cherished—most beloved. You know I always told you how I became possessed of your mother's secrets, and how careful I was to counteract their effect. She has written to the King, your father, mentioning the report of our intrigue, and recommending him to send for you immediately. As well as I was able I parried this thrust, but did it, I am aware, badly, as I knew how true was the remark. Again,—my wife's daughter's husband has been murdered in London, and in all probability the widow will pass the winter here, so that my wife will seize this opportunity of closing the embassy, purposely to get rid of your mother, whom, you know, she hates. This will necessarily exclude you; and, in order to have a sure rendezvous, I have entrusted this letter to Brett, of whose loyalty and friendship I am well assured, and to whom, should you have an opportunity, you may always entrust an answer. I have no fear but that one so great an adept in the art of love will convey it in

safety. You know the small house situated on the right hand after leaving the Champs Elysées, and after having passed the summit of the rising ground. I have taken that house, and placed a confidential person in it. Every day when you ride out in your carriage you will contrive to be there about three o'clock, and await my arrival. On presenting yourself the first time, which I hope will be to-morrow, you will merely mention the word—'Vendome.' You will find a fire lighted, and every thing comfortable. Forgive the absence of the vocabulary of affection which I own is due to you, and which now hovers on my pen. Henceforward your love forms my existence. I live but for you, and have no words to express my gratitude for the burning delight I have passed in your society. I shall see you at dinner to-day; but I shall purposely avoid any communication beyond the most distant respect, lest the eager ears of those around us may be somewhat led to confirm these suspicions. Above all things, endeavour not to let our eyes meet at dinner; and we, being mutually assured of each other's undying affections, must do the



violence to our feelings of ceasing to behold, with that peculiar look of intense love, the person you most adore. You know all the libertines of the court say, 'Tout est permis à Paris, mais il faut garder les convenances.' Therefore, discretion, my dearest angel, and à demain." The initial, an M, was placed at the end. The Duchess gave a deep sigh. Her worst fears were realized—her daughter was her rival, and conspired against her. The man who professed the deepest love and affection for her opened her letters, became acquainted with her still lingering love for the capricious monarch, and had read all her remarks, and some written in haste and spleen against himself, thereby betraying that she had used him to gain her own purposes. A slight rustling in the passage made her instantly conceal the letter; and with a countenance as placid as a lake in the calm of a summer's evening, she proceeded to affix the various patches, which it was then the fashion to wear.

It was her daughter, who came prepared to meet the storm before the dinner hour.

"Ah, my little dear!" said the Duchess,

smiling through her paint and patches, "you have been expeditious to-day. Why, I am not half ready!"

The Countess, little expecting so endearing a salute, at once suspected that her mother was totally ignorant, and that Brett must have again possessed himself of the note.

"I hastened, my dearest mother, because you always accused me of keeping you in waiting."

"Look, my child, at the clock, and tell me what is the hour. I have been reading a part of Romeo and Juliet, and became so enamoured of the poet, that I forgot the hour."

"It is scarcely five."

"I have yet a quarter of an hour. If we go on increasing in the lateness of the dinner hour, I should not wonder if, in one hundred years, people of high fashion will not dine before eight ; but it is agreeable. We have our drives before the day closes, and the evenings are always cheerful by a blazing fire, when the cold Parisian winter sets in."

"The Countess of Northumberland is always punctual, my dear mamma."

"And always cold, haughty, disagreeable, and reserved."

“ It is her manner, and means nothing ; but Mr. Montague always makes amends by his wit and cleverness.”

“ Yes !” said the Duchess, as she rose from her chair ; “ he is certainly a dear, clever, amusing man, whose society is courted by all, and who, by his noble hospitality, does honour to his situation. Call my Jezebel of a servant, I pray, and let me hasten my toilette.”

All the penance of dress being completed, the Duchess passed through the saloon, and there saw the various prints in undisguised confusion on the floor.

“ There,” she said, carelessly ; “ I wonder who has been kind enough to throw my prints in this disorder ?”

“ In passing,” replied the Countess, “ I pulled the portfolio from the table, and left it there to be picked up by the valet.”

“ You gave yourself the trouble, my dear child, I see, of lifting up the portfolio itself, and left the lighter articles.”

“ I was fearful of being late at my toilette.”

“ It matters little, the servants will replace them. Come on, my child, and do not linger

over such an accident as if it signified the least."

On arriving at the embassy, the reception of the Duchess was, as usual, cold even to jealousy; but the Countess, considered as a child sacrificed at the altar of Mammon, was better received, and placed by the side of the ambassadrice. Montague made a low formal bow; his eyes betrayed no passion, and his tongue no word of affection; but Colonel Brett's manner was more unreserved than usual.

Montague paid much court to the Duchess, who received him with great attention, but never once throughout the evening did Montague approach the Countess, nor did Brett venture, beyond his usual respect, to exchange a syllable.

In vain, during the splendour of the repast, did the young confiding Countess, deeply enamoured as she was, seek a look of affection from the Ambassador. On his countenance there was a marked formality, and in his numerous witticisms he directed his words and his looks more to the Duchess than any other person present.

Perfectly convinced, from Brett's statement,

that his letter had arrived at its destination, Montague avoided meeting the eyes of his poor fluttering victim, who he saw could not master her feelings, and who, from time to time, looked towards him in all the eagerness of hope, to catch one affectionate glance. To the hour of departure, the same visible coldness existed, and Brett, as if tutored by the Ambassador, devoted his attention to others ; so that the Countess of Northumberland, animated by the best and kindest intentions, kept the poor child close to her side, and seemed glad to withdraw herself from the rest, and seek refuge in the artlessness and innocence of her conversation.

“ Now I am well assured,” began the Countess, who could hardly wait until the carriage door was closed, “ that what Colonel Brett told us this morning is strictly true. Why, Mr. Montague seemed labouring under a heaviness of spirits that was astonishing. He never spoke to me once ; and seemed overwhelmed in some thoughts which clouded his brow, and made him sad and sullen.”

“ Men, my dear, like the weather, have their sunshine and their shades—their fair and



their stormy moments. A man always perfectly calm would be as insufferable as one always stormy ; the variation is necessary to prevent stagnation—as the ocean would become putrid, if it were not agitated occasionally. I wish I could come at the secret. I am sure Louis has not remitted the money to our King ; but I could not glean it from Montague. Do not you find it very cold to-night ?”

“ I was so lost in my wonder at Mr. Montague’s altered manner, that I never thought it was so chilly.”

“ Oh, child, he will be all sunshine to-morrow ; men in his situation have sometimes duties the most delicate and the most disagreeable to perform. Why, from your pensive manner, one might fancy you had tumbled in love with the old man.” And here, as the Duchess laughed, the Countess felt the rush of blood to her face, and heartily rejoiced that the sombre lamps, here and there dangling from huge posts over the centre of the road, threw their dim lights on the top and not in the interior of the carriage. For her nominal husband the Countess had never felt the delicious sensation of affection and love ; in fact, she

was a wife merely in form and name ; but now she had been ensnared, and all the cunning of the sex came to her aid. Firmly believing, from her mother's affectionate manner, that she was ignorant of the rivalry which existed between them, she talked in her usual light, frivolous, and unguarded way ; but when alone, she pondered over the altered manner, the cold, formal salutation, the dignified reserve of him to whom she had given more than her heart. Glad indeed did she feel when the carriage arrived, and she found herself once more in her own bed-room, having kissed her mother and bidden her a good night.

The Duchess, impatient to be alone, still concealed the wish under an invitation to her daughter to sit and talk over the affair—the dinner, the dresses, and the manners of the company ; but the excuse of a headache, a complaint easily feigned, as it cannot be traced, gave one the pretence of retiring, and the other an opportunity of being alone.

The Duchess was nursing her venom. She betrayed no haste, but to her maid appeared to linger longer than usual before she dismissed her ; and even after that, fearing that the

Jezebel, as she always called her, might return, she sat down by the fire. But her countenance had changed ; there was no longer a smile upon that once beautiful face, but a sneer of revenge, a frown of undisguised hatred. She fastened the door, as was her custom, and drawing a small writing table near the fire, she wrote that famous letter to the king, still preserved among the *Harleian Manuscripts*.

Before the Duchess yielded herself to the persevering and persuading tongue of Montague, she had drawn from him the superstitious weakness of the monarch. It appears from Burnet, that “ the King had ordered him to find out an astrologer, of whom it was no wonder he had a great opinion, for he had, long before his restoration, foretold that he should enter London on the 29th of May, 1660. The astrologer was yet alive, and Montague found him, and saw that he was capable of being corrupted, so he prompted him to send the King such hints as would serve his own ends.”

In the passion the Ambassador manifested for the Duchess, he forgot his usual prudence : by way of enlivening his mistress with anecdotes as piquant as they were rare, he

from time to time made her acquainted with all the little arts he had used with this astrologer, to lead the King in accordance with his wishes ; and he had ascertained, from all the Duchess's letters, which, it has been mentioned, he always opened before he sent, that not one word of this secret had been betrayed.

The Duchess treasured this up with all the cunning of a naturally intriguing woman, and of one who always thought the tide of affection, so variable in Montague, might one day turn against her ; therefore, whenever Montague left her after a tête-à-tête, in which all the plans had been betrayed, she invariably committed them to paper, with their dates, and with the Ambassador's comments upon them.

She had now the whole night before her, for it was scarcely half-past ten o'clock, and to sleep were as impossible as for the blind to see. She first took the letter Brett had deposited in the portfolio of prints. She compared it, with all the coolness of a judge, with many of the notes and love epistles to herself ; of the handwriting there could not be a doubt—no, not even in the suspicion of the King. Every word was carefully scanned—the style, the abbre-

viations were exact; and, strange as it may appear, at this moment the Duchess wished, in spite of her own conviction, to find some dissimilitude which might calm her vengeance, and lead her to the hope that the note was a forgery.

What had happened was too plain for any one to doubt. The artful concealment of Mr. Thynne's death from the Countess of Northumberland was accounted for, in his wish that, at this last dinner, which almost all the ambassadors in Paris had attended, there should be a marked coolness and respect for the Countess of Sussex, which might, in some manner, cast ridicule on the scandal which had become rather rife; and as, after that day, the embassy would be closed, the last impression made on the public would be, that he was still devoted to the Duchess, and that the affair of the Countess was merely a blind. She now retraced in her mind how often Montague had declared the necessity of going to Versailles to pay his respects to the Grand Monarque, and how invariably the Countess went out on those days in her own carriage, for she was liberally supplied with money, and



had her own equipage and her own separate establishment. Here she was convinced how long she had been duped, even by a child of fifteen—that hurt her vanity, as much as the intrigue excited her revenge.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE pen of vengeance is always sure to write ; to a vindictive mind, words are never wanting—to a revengeful spirit, the heart's blood is the ink :—

“ Heaven has no curse like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.”

All former affection was forgotten, and the sacrifice of her daughter's honour weighed lightly in the scale in comparison with the Duchess's insulted and defrauded love. After the usual beginning, the letter was thus continued :\*—“ I am so much afflicted, that I can hardly write this for crying, to see a child that I doated on, as I did on her, should make me so

\* See English Causes Célèbres.

ill a return, and join with the worst of men to ruin me ; for sure, never was malice like the Ambassador's, that, only because I would not answer to his love, and the importunities he made to me, was resolved to ruin me. He has neither conscience or honour, and has several times told me, that in his heart he despised you and your brother ; and that for his part, he wished, with all his heart, that the Parliament would send you both to travel, for you were a dull, governable fool, and the Duke a wilful fool ; so that it were yet better to have you than him. But that you always chose a greater beast than yourself to govern you ; and that you had made him consult an astrologer for you, as if he did not bribe the man, to make you believe his wishes. He told the King of France, that many people had reported that he had made love to me, but that there was nothing in it, for that he had too much respect for you, to think of such a thing. As for my Lady Sussex, I hope you will think fit to send for her, as I wrote before ; for she is now mightily discoursed of for the Ambassador. If you will not believe me in this, make inquiry into the thing, and you will

find it true. I promise you, that for my conduct, it shall be such as that you nor nobody shall have occasion to blame me. And I hope you will be just to what you said to me, which was at my house, when you told me you had letters of mine; you said, ‘Madam, all that I ask of you, for your own sake, is, live so for the future, as to make the least noise you can, and I care not who you love.’ Oh! this noise that is, had never been, had it not been for the Ambassador’s malice. I cannot forbear once saying again, I hope you will not gratify his malice in my ruin.”

In this letter\* the mind of the Duchess of Cleveland is betrayed. She carefully veils her own intrigue, to make the complaint apparently emanate from apprehension, lest the affair of the king’s daughter should become public. The abuse of the King by Montague—the betrayal, so carelessly done, of the astrologer, which the King had desired, to avoid all ridicule, to be kept a profound secret—she well knew would excite the vengeance and hatred of the monarch. And as for herself, the letter only means that *she* was not to be considered; because, if she did intrigue with the Ambassador,

she had the King's permission. The letter, apparently written in grief, and without any regard to style, was artfully contrived. She knew the weak points of the King—his fear of ridicule—his annoyance at finding himself betrayed by the man he had most trusted—and finally, that his Ambassador had intrigued with his daughter. She felt confident of success. She was sure the affair of the Countess of Sussex would crown all; and if she were doubted, the letter of which she had possessed herself was “conviction, strong as holy writ.”

“Now will I be fearfully revenged!” And with this feeling rankling in her bosom, she knelt down and said her prayers. With a heart beating high with exultation, she muttered over words learnt by rote, and said without feeling; they were mumbled as a form, for she had often declared she never could sleep if she omitted this ceremony, having performed this farce, she looked carefully at her night lamp, bolted her doors, folded the letter, placed it under her pillow, and soon experienced in her dreams all the delights she anticipated.

The Countess, on the contrary, was ill at



ease. She thought less of her fallen dignity than of the extraordinary behaviour of Montague, and, finding her bed any place but that of repose, she devoted her time to the Ambassador, and wrote him a warm affectionate note, in which she betrayed her love for him, and her total disregard for all its consequences. Again and again she inquired the reason of this sudden change, and, in conclusion, implored an explanation.

At breakfast, not a word escaped the Duchess, not a hint which could betray her intentions. The Countess looked discomforted and melancholy. Her mother attributed it to the variable weather, and the tête-à-tête, which endured an hour, was wholly occupied in the Duchess recommending a medical adviser, and the Countess resisting the proposition. At the conclusion of this time, the servant announced "that the gentleman had arrived." "Let him be shown into my boudoir. I will see him presently."

"Bid my page attend me in my room," the Countess said. Both separated; both felt assured that neither party was sincere. The Duchess had made it somewhat evident, from

her anxiety that the medical man should afford all the conversation, and the Countess, young as she was, had her mother's cunning and her mother's quickness, and saw through the device.

On arriving at her private room, the page presented himself. "Here, now," she began, "take this purse, and use its contents lavishly. It is my wish to know who is that man with my mother—his estate, name, lineage, and pursuit; and, mark me, I must be made acquainted why he comes here at this unusual hour, and for what purpose he is destined. Here also is a note for the King's Ambassador. You will give it into his own hand, and unobserved." She drew from her bosom the letter, and bade the boy remember that his future progress in life depended on three things—activity, secrecy, and discretion. "Go," she continued. "I do not bind you as to time; but do not return until your mission is fulfilled."

"Your are accustomed to such journeys?" said the Duchess.

The man bowed.

"And I am informed that I may place implicit confidence in you."

Again the man bowed.

“How long do you require before you are in readiness to leave Paris?”

“Half an hour.”

“Go, and be expeditious. When you are ready booted and mounted, come to the bottom of the Champs Elysées, and there I will myself give you the despatch. Your reward depends upon your expedition, and I shall be well assured you have performed your task, by the letter you will bring in answer.”

The man bowed, and left the room.

“He would answer my purpose well, if he locks up his secret as carefully as he does his words. Bid my coachman to come at two o’clock,” she said, to a servant, who, in obedience to a summons, had come to the room, “and bid my maid attend me.”

“I have a dress, I think,” she continued to her maid, “much the same as the Countess usually wears?”

“Your Grace has the very fellow to it.”

“Spare your words, and place it ready for me. I would be served, not answered.”

“Your Grace asked me a question.”

“Which could have been answered by your

producing the dress. Your voice is sharp and shrill, and penetrates my head, making it ache; besides, it is not my habitude to discourse with my servants. Your shoes creak; I pray you let them be thrown aside. Give me my dark veil; and bid the Countess's page come to me."

"He is gone out, your Grace—I saw him go."

"Enough—enough! I presume you saw him go, and thus became acquainted with the fact. When he returns, bid him come to me."

The poor maid, abashed at the continued reprimand, left the room; but she made ample amends, with her fellow-servants, for the restraint upon the natural liberty of her tongue elsewhere.

It has been mentioned, that the mother and daughter each had their separate equipages; and as each followed the bent of their own inclinations, it was not their habit to ask as to the employment of each other's time.

At two o'clock the Duchess's carriage arrived, and when her Grace was therein, she desired to be driven to the Rue de Varennes, in the

Fauxbourg St. Germain ; but no sooner had it left the gate, than the order was countermanded, and the coachman directed to drive to the Champs Elysées, and to stop about that part now called the Place de la Concorde. It required but a few minutes to effect this. The courier was there, and called to the side of the carriage, into which he was instructed to place his head. "Here is the despatch, to be delivered to the King. If you are overtaken, you lose your reward, for you have the means to get forward, as ample as those who might follow you could have. Much depends upon your despatch ; tarry not on the road, and remember, that your silence in England is as necessary as your prudence and circumspection here.—Go."

The courier cracked his whip, and the short stout horse plunged through the muddy streets of Paris.

"Drive me on the road to Versailles," said the Duchess ; and the coachman continued his way up the Champs Elysées.

On arrival at that point where now stands that mighty monument to the glory of the



French arms—the triumphal arch—the Duchess saw, on the right hand, a small house, surrounded by a wall. She desired her coachman to stop, and, having alighted, directed her servants to go with her carriage to the Countess de la Rivière, and place themselves and her coach at the Countess's disposal until four o'clock, at which hour they were to return for her.

This done, she approached the door, having ascertained that it was the only house in that then desolate vicinity. To her summons a voice inside, of rather an aged woman, asked—“*Qui va là?*” The Duchess, in the most juvenile voice she could imitate, answered—“*Vendome.*” Immediately the door was opened, and, crossing a yard, she was ushered into a small and comfortable apartment. She might have spared herself the precaution of the black veil, for the old woman was instructed that she was not to notice the person who would come, and, if possible, to overcome the most fatal of all the faults of woman—curiosity.

Left alone, the Duchess opened a door, and discovered that it led into a bed-room, in which

was a blazing fire; the rest of the house seemed unfurnished, and there was no one in it but the old woman, who, like a cautious sentinel at the fortress gate, allowed none to pass who could not give the word.

Montague was too ardent a lover to be after his time. At a quarter to three, the noise of a carriage was heard outside, and the gate creaked on its rusty hinges. The Duchess threw her veil over her bonnet, and sitting down by the fire in the bed-room, with her back towards the door, awaited her faithless lover.

Montague, on entering, locked the door, and proceeded, with all the eagerness of desire, to embrace his young conquest. Without regarding the difference of figure, which the Duchess artfully concealed by bending herself down, Montague threw his impassioned arms around her, and was about to pour on her supposed willing ears the declaration of eternal love and affection, when his astonished eyes met the cold stony glance of the Duchess.

“What is this?” he said. Then instantly recovering himself, he resumed—“Ah! my good Duchess; always faithful to a rendezvous—always punctual to the hour.”

“ Good,” said the Duchess, drily ; “ your Excellency is alike punctual, and, I hope, pleased to find me a little before my time.”

“ Indeed I am. I have so much to tell you, and so few opportunities, that I am delighted at this tête-à-tête ; especially now that the Countess has closed the embassy on account of her son-in-law’s death.”

“ As you mentioned in your note, sent by that most careful of Mercuries, Colonel Brett.”

“ He gave it to you, I hope, unseen ?”

“ Yes, sir ; I can assure you it never has been seen by any other than myself.”

“ It was so intended.”

“ Then I wonder it was addressed to my daughter, and artfully placed for her to take. Cease, Mr. Montague, such silly subterfuges ! You write to so many, you forget what you say ; and I can see that you count on our former intimacy to stop the natural current of remorse and my just vengeance. Is not my daughter a victim to your vile arts ? Can you deny a crime at which the worst would revolt ? Was it not sufficient to decoy me from my sovereign, without embittering the few moments of pleasure left me in the society of my daugh-

ter? Nay, you worse than cowardly spirited cur, you have betrayed alike your sovereign and myself, and poisoned the child against her mother, by declaring that I was the mistress of the King, and that King her father. I have yet the spirit of a woman to defy your utmost malice; and now am convinced of all your mean and shallow devices, in having opened my letters, kept back those which might have hurt you, and written others to soften down my expressions. Your wife suspects our former intimacy—she shall be certain of it. The King believes in your sincerity—he shall be apprised of the seduction of his child; and the proud Montague will, before the summer commences, find another minister in Paris—himself disgraced, despised, and degraded.”

“Why, my dear Duchess, you are quite in heroics to-day. Come, come—‘unknit that threatening brow’—we, who have been such true friends, must not be enemies.”

“What! would you have me imitate your own baseness, and befriend the man who has ruined my child?”

“And what good can arise from the discovery? A prudent parent would conceal the



child's weakness—not hurt her reputation, by blazoning it to the world.”

“The world and I have long quarrelled. When I was the King's favourite, I felt its fawn; but, when I was dismissed, I experienced its cold disdain. I yielded myself in an evil hour to you; and, in the man I cherished and loved, I behold the worst enemy of my child! Your coolness, at this moment, shocks and revolts me; your presence is as hideous to my sight as that of the worst reptile; and if I could overcome the insult to myself, I cannot control my disgust at finding a rival in my own child. I came here, dreading, yet courting this interview. I find I have courage and determination sufficient to endure it; and, in the full conviction of your approaching ruin with your sovereign and your wife—(ah! that arrow struck your heart, for I saw the whiteness of your lip)—I rejoice in the triumph which awaits my effort, and which now—ah! start not!—even now, is far on its road to England.”

“You scarcely can have been so foolish as to have sent to the King? Believe me, he will not deign to read your letter. Besides,



he cannot credit an assertion so evidently false as that in reference to the Countess of Sussex."

"His Majesty, I presume, will pay more attention to your own handwriting. I compared it with notes written to myself. And, by way of assuring the monarch how great was your endeavour to win me, I have given some details concerning the astrologer, and quoted your own words concerning the Parliament, and your wish that they would 'send the King to travel.' You see I am cool and collected. I speak in the voice of a woman whose heart is broken, and who has collected the fragments, dead to all other feeling but that of unceasing revenge."

"Then I am lost; and you, who professed to love me, cause my ruin."

"You are repaid as is just. You professed to love me, and have chilled my heart against myself and my child."

"Cannot this letter be recalled, or another written, in some measure to soothe the King?"

"If, at this moment, the treasure of the world was at my feet—if now my ambition

could be gratified by striding over my rivals; being again the favourite of the monarch—if power unlimited were offered, affection again sworn to and foolishly credited—nay, if recalling that letter could restore the quiet of my mind, which in youth and innocence I experienced—I swear before my God I would not do it; but rather will I watch your degradation, and rejoice in your domestic calamities. My heart would once have revolted against such an idea, and the natural goodness which was there enshrined would have prompted me to forgiveness. I tell you that heart is shattered, and every fragment has again united in hatred of the world, in detestation of men, and abhorrence of Montague. I pray you, sir, retire; my carriage must be here now; bestow the word ‘Vendome’ upon more willing ears. The Countess of Sussex will leave Paris this evening, and never again will you hear of the Duchess of Cleveland, excepting in her voice of exultation at each successive calamity which awaits you, and her scream of delight when your degradation is effected.”

Montague made a last effort to soothe the infuriated Duchess, who, notwithstanding her

passion, controlled herself to admiration. A fixed, immoveable hatred seemed quivering on her lips; and, darting a fierce look of unrelenting revenge, she passed the door and gained her carriage.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE trial of Konigsmark had fixed the stain of blood upon the Count in the minds of all men ; yet he was declared guiltless, and was free. With the audacity of his nature, he thought of presenting himself at court, where he was quite aware that the death of Thynne was by no means a displeasing affair ; still, the fear of a cold reception, and the evident scandal which would arise if he were received, kept him at home until the thick darkness of the London fogs sheltered him from observation.

The lively interest taken by the wife of the Spanish Ambassador at the trial, and the love of adventure always uppermost in the Count's mind, prompted him, when the dark evenings afforded him a concealment, frequently to walk

in the street in which she resided, and which was close to the scene of the murder. In vain he watched each person going to and from the house—he was aware his pronounciation betrayed him as a foreigner, and that his countenance had met the public gaze much too long to avoid a recognition; at last, tired of walking and watching, he knocked stoutly at the door, and when it was opened, gave a note, directed to her Excellency. In it was nothing but an address in Westminster; and, as her Excellency did not recognise the hand-writing, it was given to the Ambassador for an opinion as to who or what it could concern. The note, after having been scrutinized, was thrown into the fire and forgotten.

But the lady, for whom Konigsmark had perilled his life in the bull-fight, and who had left her father's house to share his fortune, still clung to the remembrance of the Swede, not with any love, but with a sincere pity. Her health had suffered much from the excitement of her journey to Barcelona—her discovery—the tyranny of her parent—and, ultimately, the marriage with the Ambassador, whilst her young heart was devoted to Konigsmark; but all



past misfortunes and sufferings were little in the scale with the trial. There was no one who knew her secret. Not one suspected how much her life was concerned in that event. Around her every one saw the guilt of the Count. The judge's favour could not disguise the truth; and quibbles of law could not overcome such incontrovertible evidence. Thus it was that, having heard the matter discussed in private, and listened to the evidence in court, she had wound up her mind to hear the fatal sentence of death. The acquittal acted upon her as has been detailed; and from that moment she had gradually sunk, until now her feeble, attenuated frame could scarcely promise to be the tenement of life for a month. Neither had she, throughout that trial, once been able to fix the eye of Konigsmark; and to that moment she was ignorant if she had been observed by him, for in that court other thoughts than those of women occupied the mind of the Swede.

—The shriek, and the order for the Spanish Ambassador's carriage, had arrested his attention, and thus induced him to hazard another adventure—for it was a fact he never had

recognised her, nor was he at all aware of the great interest taken by her in all the details of the trial. She died within a month of the acquittal, carrying with her the secret of her love, unsuspected by her husband, and regretted by her friends.

The letter written by Brett was received by Konigsmark. It was couched in warm terms, and declared strongly that neither the Ambassador, the Countess of Northumberland, nor himself, ever entertained the slightest suspicion derogatory to the character of the Count; and seemed to contain an apology for the trial, intimating a supposition that the Count had himself demanded it, in order that the public should thus be made aware that although Vratz was his servant, yet he was himself innocent of the foul transaction. Brett proceeded to hint that the Count was required in France, as his regiment was about to be ordered on service; and, in the most casual manner, towards the conclusion, hinted that the Ambassador had written to the widow, the Lady Ogle, as she was always called, (although Lord Ogle took the name of Percy,) to pass the first months of her widowhood with the Countess of

Northumberland, whose anxiety to see her was doubly increased by the misfortunes she had experienced. There was a slight allusion to the child's age and innocence ; and a careless remark made, that first impressions never were effaced, and that, to change the gloomy current of her thoughts, another marriage would be the most efficacious medicine. Such was the general tenor of the letter, and it instantly occurred to Konigsmark that England was no place for him ; he had not shown himself in public, and he prowled about at night fearful of a discovery.

The few papers published in those days still teemed with remarks upon the trial, the partiality of the judge, and the evident participation in the crime by the Count. These constant allusions—besides the very person for whom the crime was committed being now likely to visit Paris—the certainty of obtaining Brett's and Montague's assistance, provided he paid handsomely, decided the Count to leave England directly ; and, a fortnight or three weeks after the execution, he having, during that time, remained in concealment, the Channel was again crossed ; and Konigsmark, freed

from the apprehension of insult, cast aside his dark wig and beard, and assumed the jocund manner he had always maintained.

The scrap of paper sent by Vratz disturbed his mind—for he was naturally superstitious. It was headed “A dying man’s prophecy,” and was couched in these words—“The degraded hand shall take its own vengeance.” Not a night since its reception had Konigsmark slept without reading this prophecy ; yet, in spite of all his endeavours to unravel this mysterious expression, he never satisfied himself that he had arrived at its meaning ; but he leant most to the idea, that the degraded hand had some reference to the one which still wore the ring ; and that Vratz’s death would be avenged by suicide.

As Konigsmark cared very little for living men, he was not likely much to heed the dead. A gloomy superstition always haunted him about the child of his destiny, in which he clearly recognised Lady Ogle, and the wonders of the Egyptian sorcerer were fresh in his mind ; but neither ghost nor giant could daunt him. He was one of those fortunate men who might have asked the question, What is fear ? Even the quickened pulsation of his heart, as

he pondered over Vratz's words, was not applicable to fear, but to an excitement, occasioned by a doubt when this degraded hand should take its vengeance for the wrong done to its owner.

In the mean time, Lady Ogle remained at Amsterdam, and with her was the old Lady Algernon, who had never quitted her charge, or ever allowed the twice married lady to have an opinion of her own ; indeed, to this minute, she was tutored in her manner, and controlled in her expression, as when at Petworth.

"I cannot imagine," said Lady Algernon, as she looked from her window over one of the thousand canals which intersect Amsterdam, "why I am so excessively foolish as to remain in this country of fogs and ditches."

"I thought, my dear grandmamma, that it was on account of Mr. Thynne's intimacy with the Duke of Monmouth, and which, you remember, Mr. Locke said—"

"Do not trouble me, child, with the wise saws of that poor doctor. Until the man had the good fortune to travel with Joceline, I doubt if ever he had learned to make a bow."



“They say that he is a very wise and clever man.”

“*They* say, child ! Whom do you mean by *they* ? I never heard the King or the Duke make that remark ; nor did I ever see anything so wonderful in his talent. He is awkward—very awkward ; and before he corrects others he had better improve himself and his politics.”

“ And, yet, I often wish I had been allowed to follow his advice, and to have deferred my first marriage.”

“ And why ? ”

“ Because I only changed my name from child to wife, remaining still the former.”

“ Had you not a husband who bore your name—the name of Percy ? Was that not sufficient ? You were too young to be his companion.”

“ Exactly, grandmamma, and therefore, as Mr. Locke said, I ought never to have been his wife.”

“ You have grown old enough, it appears, to sit in judgment upon my conduct, and such is improper in one so young. Surely, child, you had cakes and wine at your bridal—you were

dressed in the newest and most correct fashion, and your curtesy was universally admired. I pray God your remarks do not savour of ingratitude. What can a child require more than to be the envy and admiration of all?"

"I would much rather be admired for my modest character, my unassuming manner, and my talents, than excite envy from my dress."

"Or your beauty, child?"

"Grandmamma, I am old enough now to see that red hair cannot contribute to beauty."

"I vow some fat Hollander has bewitched the child! I would the post were arrived, and the spring far enough advanced to travel. The fogs of this country have bewildered your brains."

"It would need but little persuasion to make me travel, even in these raw days."

"And I dare say my cough and my age would be little respected?"

"Surely, Madam," said Lady Ogle, somewhat excited, "I have ever been obedient to your wishes, and obeyed your desires, when I could, had I felt so disposed, have followed the bent of my own inclination."

“My dear Lady Ogle!” said the Countess Algernon, with an affected sneer.

“My dear Lady Algernon!” replied the child, with a smile. The Countess made a most elegant curtsy, and her granddaughter did the same, then, bursting into a fit of laughter, she ran to kiss her grandmother.

“Not so, child—not so—that is a vulgar exhibition. In our station of life an embrace may be exchanged on New-year’s day, but this violent and unseemly flow of supposed affection should be suppressed. Sit upright at the table, and let us to breakfast. You seem, child, to think your early marriage a misfortune—see what a blessing it has been to you. It has given you an opportunity of supporting your husband’s loss with indifference, and has saved you from all the widow’s tears and sighs, with which, in poetry, such losses are mourned.”

“I could not with much sincerity mourn for the loss of a man, who, because he was called my husband, seemed entitled to some regard. I never saw him but eight times in my life, I should have cried more bitterly had the Swedish Count died.”

“What! not forgotten that northern adventurer—that low butcher in a bull-fight—that hired desperado! I verily believe my daughter must have been insane when she introduced such a man at Petworth.”

“He was young, brave, handsome, beloved at court, and a favourite of the King.”

“Tut, child! our monarch is not nice of foreign acquaintances. Here is the post at last. Heaven be thanked! there is enough of letters to keep us employed reading and writing for the day. This is a strange hand—I know it not. Pray Heaven it be not from some in low life, who fatigues his readers with applications for charity. Ah!” she said, with a start, “it bears the signature of Monmouth—a large and bold hand, and yet too small for my old eyes. Read it to me, child, and be careful to remark the punctuation, for the sense is much changed by the stops. What can the Duke require of me?” asked the Countess, still holding the letter in her hand. “I pray it may not be for advice relative to politics—I grow too old to advise monarchs or dukes now. Read, child.”

“‘Madame.’”

“Remember, child,” interrupted the Dow-

ager, "that, to all persons of high rank, that beginning is proper and respectful, but should never be used to inferiors, excepting when they are about to suffer from your displeasure, and then the word should be without the final letter. Go on."

"I have no words to express my grief at the sad calamity which has occurred——'"

"Petworth is burnt, and my silk dresses destroyed!" ejaculated the Countess. "I shall bear it, I hope, with fortitude."

"And yet (continued the Lady Ogle) it becomes my duty, and I have only to implore your ladyship's forgiveness if I be too abrupt in my detail.'"

"I like the style. Elizabeth, give me my kerchief, that I may be prepared for my tears—and the strong scents. Now, child, go on, and I am in a position to bear the news."

"Last night, on returning from the Countess of Northumberland's, as he was alone in his carriage——'"

"What is this, child? Who was in his carriage? I like not this new style of putting the end of the sentence first, and leaving us in doubt (as in that barbarous German language)



of the meaning of the sentence, until the last word is pronounced."

" 'Your granddaughter's husband, and my most particular friend, Mr. Thynne, was set upon by ruffians and murdered.' "

" Let the servants be put into decent mourning directly—wait until I give the orders."

Lady Ogle, however, soon ran over the rest of the letter, until she arrived at the last sentence, when she threw the paper on the table, saying—" It is false—it is false !"

" I hope not, my child," said Lady Algeron, who was returning with her usual state and manner to her chair—" I have ordered the mourning; and I would not appear to do that which is unnecessary."

" He says that Count Konigsmark killed him, and I know—I feel—that it is false." Here the Lady Ogle went into violent hysterics. The servants were summoned, and not a maid was allowed to touch her, without something being placed to prevent the possibility of plebeian flesh coming in contact with such aristocratic skin. On her recovering, the first words she heard were, " There was not one inelegant attitude—the position was perfect."

It is not strange that this young girl, now a second time a widow at the age of fifteen, should be able to bear this news without any violent grief. Mr. Thynne, like Lord Ogle, had been a nominal husband. He had regarded his wife as a child, and had left her under the care of the grandmother. Her fortune had been his object; and he had scarcely ever exchanged with her, in all his life, four hours' conversation. It was evident that her hysterical fit had been produced from the accusation against Konigsmark, and she positively refused to read that part of the letter over again.

Lady Algernon was, however, somewhat lavish of her remarks upon the Swede, but soon was silent, as she had to turn her thoughts as to what was requisite to be done, in order to maintain a perfectly proper demeanour throughout this affair. Her under-toned remarks showed how anxious she was on this head. "The Duke of Monmouth will of course attend the funeral; and he will be buried in Westminster Abbey—money will effect that. These Hollanders are not much skilled in ladies dresses, and it were better to get those from France. We must not appear overcome by the

intelligence, but bear up firmly against such a calamity. It is vulgar to be murdered, although it sometimes extends to kings." Not once did the Countess betray the slightest grief. Her countenance had always been kept at school, and if she felt the smallest regret, she never betrayed half so much as in her apprehension lest her own silk dresses should have been destroyed.

Strange were the thoughts which crowded upon the poor widow's mind. There might have been some slight emotion that one who was called her husband had been so barbarously murdered, but the actual grief for the man himself was not likely to be deep, and in short was not so pretended, as will appear in the sequel; but her young heart felt strangely when Konigsmark's name had been mentioned. He had made an early impression upon her, and she was quick enough to perceive that, as the murder was committed in a carriage, it was not likely that a man who could find a thousand occasions to force a duel would descend to the mere assassin. Konigsmark must be in England, and therefore that country became a favourite with the widow. To hasten her de-

parture, she, with that little cunning excusable in the young, assumed a stately melancholy, and expressed a wish that she might be present at the funeral.

This was violently opposed by the Countess, who declared "that such things were never done; that proper people were hired to mourn; and that it was only amongst the lowest that any feeling was ever exhibited. "Do we not, child," she said, "hire musicians to blow into instruments, distorting their appearance and suffering from the exertion? and, likewise, do we not pay people to follow the dead, to wear crape, mimic sorrow, and bury the corpse? Consider how very unbecoming are red eyes, and how you must necessarily be amongst these people. Besides, it is against the law of fashion and proper society; and a lady might as well be expected to dance at an Irish wake, as to mourn at her husband's grave. It must not be."

## CHAPTER XIII.

IN these times, of which we write, the post did not arrive exactly every day at breakfast-time. Colonel Palmer had not then been swindled by Mr. Pitt out of his fair and agreed average of profit upon mail coaches. Ships did not cross the Atlantic or the Channel, without sail or oar. Men were not transported at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour. Pavement was not made of wood. Vessels were not built of iron, and cities were not lighted by gas. Darwin had not then prophesied that, before long, steam would do the work of men, horses, sails, and oars.

The letters delivered at Amsterdam on one day might be followed by another batch the next day—it depended upon the vessels which



sailed, or the express courier sent ; and not unfrequently a despatch written five days after a previous one arrived first ; and such was the irregularity of the post—if post, according to our acceptation, it could be called—that men preferred travelling long distances, and talking over an affair, to hazarding a correspondence, which it was even betting never reached its destination.

The Lady Ogle, now again a widow, was no sooner known to be in the market of matrimony, than a hundred intrigues were set on foot to procure her hand. No one thought of applying to her personally, but Konigsmark. The rest of the army of adventurers applied directly or indirectly through Lady Algernon, the Countess of Northumberland, or Montague. The two last were always supposed to be accessible to a bribe ; the older and more stately Lady Algernon was above all want, and above all temptation ; her object was high birth, which, in the first instance, she had gained, and now, more resolutely than ever did she employ her time in spinning golden cobwebs to catch large flies.

“ I think,” said Lady Algernon to her grand-

daughter, “ that your husband’s death was the most fortunate event of your life. He really was nobody—positively nobody—and your fortune helped him to the society of that wretched Duke of Monmouth ; it is enough that *he* is the idol of the people, to show how low must be his manners. Well, my dear child, your husband is dead, God give rest to his soul ! He was vulgarly murdered ; but there is one comfort in this—he was not rolled in the kennel, or trampled under foot by ruffians, but was attacked, as a gentleman should be, in his carriage, with his own servants to attend to his wounds. So far this was fortunate, because we will have it so engraven on his tomb. But, after all is done, which of course we will do, it can only be the tomb of Mr. Thynne,\* or of Thomas Thynne, Esq. Now, we must really manage, in your next marriage, to obli-

\* Thynne was buried at the west end of the south aisle of Westminster Abbey, under a marble monument. On the base is to be seen the representation of the murder, with a short inscription in English, recording the fact. A much longer inscription in Latin, and which hinted at the guilt of Konigsmark and the influences to which he owed his escape, was intended to have been engraven on the stone, but Bishop Spratt—“small, servile Spratt”—would not suffer it.

terate the plebeian name of Thynne, in the blaze of some ducal coronet. I have one which I think will fit your forehead."

"I think, my dear grandmamma——"

"Stop, child. I think it would be better if, for the future, you left off terms of endearment, which are more common amongst the lower classes than with us. Call me the Lady Algernon for the future. A girl twice a widow cannot be thought a child."

"Then I hope, Madame, you will cease to continue me as such."

"Lady Ogle—Lady Ogle, is this gratitude? Have you not female servants at your discretion? Do I allow you to do one useful thing, such as knitting, which a fruitless attempt was once made to bring into fashion? If your fan falls, are you required to stoop to recover it? Have you not a secretary to write your letters, and a person hired to read aloud to you? If you wish for music, you have only to order it—carriages await your inclination; and I verily believe that, since I first had you under my protection and tuition, I can safely aver you have never done one single thing for yourself, but eat, drink, and sleep; and, if it were

possible to avoid those things, for all common people do them, no expense should have been spared to accomplish it."

Lady Ogle could not help smiling, for she never had been allowed to laugh, and very often endeavoured to control her tears. "Lady Algernon," she said, with some gravity, "it is this dependence upon others that I would avoid; it is because I am not allowed to do anything that I am miserable."

"Good gracious, child!" interrupted Lady Algernon, "who, in his or her senses, ever desired to work to become happy? I am sure you never learnt that in any of Dryden's poems, which I desired your dependent to read aloud."

"It is, Madame, nevertheless a great source of uneasiness to me, and I find every day the truth of that which Mr. Locke recommended—the good use of time, the pleasure of being independent of every one, the certainty that no hour will linger too long, but that a general resource should be found in books and proper occupation."

"Mr. Locke, Lady Ogle, was only admitted into the houses of proper people, because he

was supposed to have some medical skill ; and, like one of his own disgusting leeches, having once fixed himself, there he remained. Heaven help your bewildered brain ! Of what use are dependents, if we do anything for ourselves ? In Sicily, I am told, even men never walk. I once heard Lord Joceline say, that the Romans used to lie on sofas and be fed ; and it is well known, even to this day, that when Queen Elizabeth—(ah ! she was one we all should follow, for she had a new dress for every day of the year)—sent a pair of silk stockings to the sovereign lady of Spain, as a present, the Ambassador replied, ‘ I would have you to know, Queens of Spain have no legs.’ There, Madame, that is the result of pre-eminence of birth, and is thus marked to show that others should work for us. Pray sit upright, and do not bend as if you carried a vulgar load upon your back. Let us talk of your next husband.”

“ I pray you excuse me, good Lady Algeron, for we shall never agree on this subject.”

“ I hope, Lady Ogle, we should never differ ; your proper respect to my age will, I am sure, prevent such incivility.”



“I am told the Countess of Sussex often differs with the Duchess of Cleveland, her mother.”

“I crave your mercy, good Lady Ogle; spare my ears that wretched creature’s name—she was of no birth; married a man who was called Palmer; committed adultery with the King, which was an honour for so low a creature; and was made a Duchess, in order that she might live abroad, and be received in some kind of society; besides, the Countess of Sussex is older than yourself.”

“One year, Madam.”

“One year at your time of life is important.” Here Lady Algernon rang a small bell, and instantly two or three servants appeared.—“Go, one of you varlets, and bid Lady Ogle’s servant to come and pick up her kerchief, which has fallen.”\*

Lady Ogle broke through all previous orders,

\* I was once sitting with a Creole young lady, at Jamaica, who dropped a ball of cotton. The mother rang a small table bell, and a negro came in. He received these orders:—“Tell Charlotte to tell Lucy to tell Caroline to tell Nancy to come here and pick up missie’s ball of cotton.” That was high life in the Colonies.

and dared to do it herself. Lady Algernon rose in a dignified manner, and left the room. The charm was broken—the heiress of all the Percies had stooped to pick up what she had carelessly let fall ; from that moment, her life began to change ; young as she was, she saw she had ventured across the Rubicon, and was resolved to have somewhat of her own way for the future.

The long suspense which was inevitable in those times between each communication was borne by Lady Ogle with proportionate patience. Day after day came and went, until the 26th of February arrived, when an English newspaper, which contained the description already given of Konigsmark, and the reward for his apprehension, fell under the notice of Lady Algernon. It was read to her by a lady in poor circumstances—retained expressly to read and to write for Lady Ogle. Latterly, Lady Algernon had become more distant with Lady Ogle, and she saw with horror that now, her young charge, from a trifling beginning, had ventured to do all and everything for herself, she even wrote her own letters, and thus Lady Algernon was unable

to arrive at their purpose, which formerly, through the amanuensis, she contrived to learn.

“ Bid the Lady Ogle to come to me. Leave that paper.” “ Lady Ogle,” the Countess began, with great gravity, “ I have observed of late, that all my desire to make you in strict respect observant of our customs has failed, and since now you no longer use the eyes of others, perhaps you will kindly oblige me by reading some parts of that newspaper, just sent me by our Ambassador. ”

“ Most willingly, my dear grandmamma ; it will delight me, and I hope prove a pleasure to you ; it is so delightful to be alone with you, when no third person can interrupt us.”

“ It may be vastly delightful, Lady Ogle, but by no means fashionable. Read, child.”

The quick eyes of Lady Ogle fell instantly on the name of Konigsmark, and, having begun the paragraph, she was obliged to continue it, and with hurried expression, she read the description of her admirer, and the proffered reward for his discovery, he being clearly suspected of the murder. The paper fell from her hands, and a sudden paleness overspread

her face ; the Countess observed it, and summoned her servant, bidding her bring some strong scents, and remarking, “ that this was a proof how erroneous it was that people of high birth could be left by themselves, without incurring some danger.” On Lady Ogle’s recovering, she immediately left the room, and in the solitude of her own chamber poured out her soul in grief. That she loved Konigsmark, she felt assured—be it right or wrong, she loved him—the general daring of his character, his kind behaviour, his soft, winning voice, his vast talent in music and languages, his quickness of wit, and his tender attention and regard, had endeared him to her. Her mind revolted against the charge now brought against him ; and, if true, she saw in it a devotion to herself ; but one so ardent, so young, and so loving could not entertain the charge for an instant : still it sapped her health, her cheek became pale, her eye sunken, and there was no appetite to restore waning nature. She dispatched servants in every direction for newspapers ; every ship from England was visited, and news, either real or manufactured, was bought. But although,



about the 5th of March, she learnt that the trial had begun on the 27th of February, and that Konigsmark, with his servant, ay, and with the men he had met in Norway—for she remembered faithfully the anecdote of the witches—were indicted for the murder of her husband, she still discredited the affair. Love is ever blind, and in her own mind she gave herself a thousand reasons why Konigsmark should demand a trial; it was, she thought, his high chivalrous notion, which disdained concealment, and which came forward to vindicate himself from the charge levelled against one of his household.

It was not until the 17th of March that the intelligence reached her of the result of the trial, and that through a letter from Paris to her mother. The same courier—for Montague, at the instance of Brett, had dispatched a person with the letters—brought a dispatch from the Ambassador to Lady Algernon.

The Ambassador's letter ran thus:—"Madame"—(Lady Algernon never allowed any familiarity of address, even from her nearest relation, and when her husband was alive, she always addressed him in her correspondence



as My Lord,)—" I presume you are aware of the fate of your granddaughter's husband, whose name will now be lost for ever. I am aware how strenuously your ladyship opposed this match, upon the legitimate grounds of inequality of birth ; the fate, therefore, of this man (it is to be remarked that Montague diplomatically avoids the mention of the name,) is not to be deplored ; and I hope your ladyship will not much grieve over your granddaughter's bereavement. It is now many years since your ladyship honoured Paris with a visit ; perhaps, at this present moment, I could entice you to return. His Majesty the Grand Monarque makes constant inquiries of your health, and desires much again to see your ladyship. The Countess of Northumberland has written a note to Lady Ogle to give her all information regarding the late trial in England, and also solicits her company to pass the spring in Paris ; but, of course, on this head, she, as well as myself, would be guided by your opinion and wish. Knowing how well disposed your ladyship has ever been to forward the pleasure of your granddaughter, and how much the latter has benefited from your advice and instruction,

I have sent a special courier to your ladyship with this dispatch, who will await your leisure, and bring back your answer. I have the honour to be, Madame, &c., &c."

"A wise ambassador," said Lady Algernon, when she had finished; "one who knows well the usages of the world. Let the courier be cared for, and amply provided with all that is necessary." Scarcely had she released herself from the society of the servant, when Lady Ogle came dancing into the room, her cheek flushed, her eyes bright, and with every demonstration of joy.

"Lady Ogle! Lady Ogle!" said the Countess, as she raised her hands, "what a very inelegant position! I have heard that dancing girls, publicly hired, distort themselves in attitudes; but for the last of the Percies to throw her arms fantastically about—it's quite shocking—very shocking!"

"My dear grandmamma, excuse my inelegances, and allow me to be natural for once. My mother has written me the kindest letter, urging me to come to Paris, and pass the requisite time of my grief with her. Surely, my dear Lady Algernon, you cannot refuse a request which I make so earnestly. I have

never been in France, and, independent of the great joy I shall experience in seeing Paris, I shall see also my mother, from whom I have been so long separated."

"Pray be seated, Lady Ogle," said the starch Countess; "whatever is done in a hurry, is generally done badly. Let us discourse upon the matter. Montague has written a letter in which he mentions the frequent inquiries of Louis XIV. concerning my health, and his wish again to see me at his court. I cannot well refuse the monarch's desire, but a thing of such grave consequence must not be hastily done. Moreover, I would remain here until I receive intelligence of the proper respect having been paid to your husband as the husband of a Percy, and of the execution of that abominable Swede."

"My letter, Lady Algernon, is complete in that respect. Mr. Thynne——"

"I crave your mercy, good Lady Ogle; say, 'my late husband,' and let his name be buried with his body."

"Well, grandmamma, he is buried; the Duke of Monmouth and many of the nobility attended. His body was embalmed and ex-

hibited in state, and everything was done to honour——”

“The husband of the last of the Percies!” interrupted Lady Algernon. “And what of that foreign Count?”

“Oh, grandmamma, acquitted, of course; and the murderers hung. The King was pleased to say that there was no ground of suspicion against him. I knew—I felt—one of his high lineage would never descend to the low connivance and cowardly assault, which ended in murder. But say, good grandmamma, are we to accept the Ambassador’s invitation?”

“The invitation, child, of the Countess of Northumberland would be a more accurate expression. I will ponder upon it. At present, I think I see no reasonable objection. But let me implore you to walk slowly and with becoming bearing, such as is customary with ladies of your high lineage and descent.”

No sooner was Lady Ogle relieved from the domestic tyranny, than again she read over her mother’s letter. It was rare for her to receive any communication from her parent, from whom she had been so long separated; but still the name of mother retained its endearment on



her mind ; and, although schooled in every art and every grace with vigilant tyranny, the heart of Lady Ogle still beat with affection for her parent, and still retained the liveliest recollection and love for all the kindness she had received. Her letter ran thus :—

“ MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—The sad account of your husband’s barbarous murder filled us with sorrow—you are really, child, very unfortunate ; but you are with her who will teach you to bear any loss with becoming grace and fortitude. We think it would dissipate your grief if you were thrown into the society of people cheerful and lively ; and we therefore have invited Count Konigsmark—with whose acquittal of all participation in the foul act you have of course been made acquainted—to pass some time with us. Poor man ! to show his wish that those who injured you should meet their proper fate, he assisted at the trial, and he was present at the execution ; and it was through his interposition that the body was embalmed,—(so little did the Countess of Northumberland know of the affair, that she had confounded the embalming of Vratz, of which we have already spoken, with that of Mr. Thynne,)—and left in state for the public to ap-



proach. The King invited the Count to court directly after the acquittal ; but Konigsmark, having accepted the command of a French regiment of horse, (and he looks very handsome in his uniform,) preferred leaving a country in which any one could suspect his honour and his loyalty. The Carnival is now at its height, and you would be much amused at its drollery. I have put all my servants in becoming mourning, and we have closed the embassy, for the public eye must be respected, and we must do all in accordance to the custom on such occasions ; but there is no occasion for grief, when we are released from such surveillance. My husband has written such a letter to Lady Algernon as will induce her instantly to leave Amsterdam. He knows her weak points, and has assailed them. Pray be careful she does not read this ; and if she wavers about departure, speak of the King and the court. Konigsmark desires his respects to you ; he is quite aware that you never could have suspected any participation on his part in the foul transaction. I shall expect you as soon as possible. Until I see you, dearest girl, believe me, your affectionate mother.—Paris, 4th March, 1682.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

KONIGSMARK, on his return to Paris, was received as usual at Versailles and the Tuileries. The domestic news which agitated England, in regard to the murder, was little cared about on the Continent. Newspapers were not then daily exchanged, and France was more occupied with the intrigues of her own court than the occasional murder of some English gentleman.

Brett undertook the delicate task of again offering the rich heiress's hand to the Swede for a due and proper consideration; and, strange as such things may appear in the present day, the sale of Lady Ogle is a matter of history, and beyond contradiction. Who, in these days, would believe that Members of the English House of Commons, and even the King himself, received pensions, regularly paid by the French Ambassador in London, and that, when such pensions

were in arrear, the vagabonds who received them publicly exclaimed against the delay? We have it on the authority of Dalrymple, that, for one million livres, Charles himself said to Barillon, the French minister, that it would be the sure way “de mettre pour toute sa vie l’Angleterre dans sa dependance.” If kings could sell their countries, it was natural enough for parents to sell their children; and do we not find amongst those *patriots* who received five hundred guineas by the hands of the French Ambassador—by the order of Louis le Grand—the name of Algernon Sidney?—and, worse than he, figures Hampden, the grandson of the great patriot, and then in Parliament, for a similar sum!

Montague’s idol through life was money, and Brett was a worthy coadjutor and partner. We have before given a proof that the Countess of Northumberland was not firm against the golden allurements. In those days, profligacy was a password to honours, and bribery and corruption were an introduction to the court.

Brett was not likely to offer poor Lady Ogle for a small sum, and he well knew how to manage this business.

Konigsmark’s position was precarious—for scandal has a thousand tongues, and ill deeds fly over the face of the earth. He might meet the cold look of disdain, and know the cause; and

when saluted by smiles or respect, it must be attributed to ignorance of past events. Eager to be entrapped, and with the vision ever before him of the star of his destiny, still superstitious, he closed with Brett's offer, and at once agreed to pay the sum of thirty thousand pounds to Montague—such sum, it being understood, was to be kept apart and free from all settlements. A paper, acknowledging himself the debtor to this amount, and bearing on it the agreement that the sum was not to be demanded until one month after his marriage, was signed, and Konigsmark was admitted to the family dinners at the embassy—the house being closed against all others, and even the presence of the Count kept as far as possible a secret.

Konigsmark, believing himself in security, not only from the attacks of malicious tongues but from future poverty, was eager to leave Paris immediately, in order to conduct his future bride to that capital; but it was argued and agreed that it were better for him to remain until the return of Montague's courier than to hazard passing him on the road; and this was finally agreed upon.

The Duchess of Cleveland, after her last meeting with Montague, knowing that her letter would almost to a certainty arrive at its proper destination, felt all the inward satisfaction of gluttoned



revenge. Supplanted by her own child!—gulled and deceived by the very man to whom she had confided all her wishes!—sneered at and despised by the Countess of Northumberland!—she looked forward with impatience to the moment when she might stand boldly forth and say—“ I did this; I have hurled you from your proud situation; my influence with the monarch is yet powerful, and yours is gone for ever.” Few men can endure ridicule. No man was more sensitive than Charles II.

As the carriage drew up at her door, an observant eye might have detected that her step was firmer, her head more exalted, her cheek more glowing, her lip more satirical. It was but for a moment. Her daughter’s figure passed into the salon, and the mother’s face became instantly blanched. She retired to her room, laid aside her out-door dress, and, with a heart quickly beating, and, with a faltering tongue, she desired that the Countess of Sussex might be sent to her.

The young Countess, scarcely yet so initiated in vice and cunning, felt a warning thrill, a sickening sensation, as her mother’s servant delivered the message; and, when she answered, “ You will tell my mother I shall instantly obey her summons,” she felt almost choked with the utterance.

The Duchess of Cleveland had resolved upon the salon for this dreadful interview; and she



had endeavoured, by means of some exciting drops, to rouse her spirit for the painful scene. Having seated herself in the exact position which she occupied when Brett paid his visit, she held her hands firmly against her heart, for it seemed bursting with its fluttering palpitation, and increased in fulness and rapidity as the handle of the door turned, and her daughter entered the room.

The Countess of Sussex, at that time not sixteen, was of sufficient beauty to attract much notice and attention. Her hair was jet black, but of a surprising luxuriance; her eyes were large and soft, swimming apparently in moisture; her nose was very slightly *retroussé*, but her mouth made ample amends for this slight defect—it was small, with the most fascinating smile, which seemed never to abandon it; and over her delightful countenance there was always the laughing of a playful disposition. Her temper was above all praise—it defied irritability; and never was there seen a girl with a more innocent, more childish, more fascinating countenance—"fronti nulla fides" we are told. This natural innocence had yielded to the persevering Montague, and added another to the long list of his victims.

The fear—for the guilty are always fearful—blanched her countenance as she entered the

room. The smile, the natural smile, forsook her lips, and there was a quick, tremulous motion, which betrayed her inquietude of mind. She saw her mother's stern countenance—she surmised the cause of the interview—and she felt convinced that the early drive in the carriage, and the late return, had not been made without some event which had caused this summons. Neither spoke. Guilt held fast the tongue of the one; remorse, fear, shame, jealousy, and anger sealed the lips of the other. With a slow and unsteady step, the Countess moved towards a fauteuil, to which, with a trembling hand, the Duchess pointed. There was a stillness, which would have awed innocence, in the room; and some minutes elapsed before a deep sigh from the mother disturbed the silence. At length she spoke, and only in these words—"My daughter!" when a shudder overcame her, and her child rushed into her arms, saying—"Yes, yes, dearest mother, ever—ever your daughter!" The first difficulty was overcome; both had found words; and now the deep, wounded feelings of the heart began to find vent. With a silent resolution, the Duchess unwound the arms of the daughter, and, pointing to the chair, desired her to be seated.

"The first pang of this dreadful meeting," began the Duchess, "is, Heaven be thanked, overcome, and I can now proceed to my duty."

“What can this mean?” said the Countess. “Let me pray you, good mamma, at once to relieve my mind.”

“I have first to accuse myself, and to heap upon my own head all the ashes of this sorrowful day. I have often read of the benefit of example to the child in the behaviour of the parent, and I could scarcely hope the innocent would escape when the mother was guilty. But we must part—and part for ever! and before that last sad farewell, I would so far reconcile you with yourself, as to place your guilt to my neglect.” The Countess of Sussex here attempted to speak, but her mother motioned her to silence. “Speak not until I have done—attempt not by any subterfuge, or by any art, now well known to both of us, to add either hypocrisy or falsehood to your crime. Make me not curse you, when, at the last moment, I would still bless you!”

“My mother—my mother!” ejaculated the Countess, “for the love of Heaven, curse not your poor child!”

“Child!—ah, no longer my child; but a being whom as a mother I should love, and whom as a woman I must hate. Child!—ah! what a pang it costs to tear that beloved name from my memory. Firstly, then—for I must do this painful duty—I accuse you of dishonouring your name and lineage with the Ambassador.”

“ Ah !”

“ This note, directed to you, was placed by Colonel Brett in that portfolio ; seated where I am now, that glass betrayed every look and every action. You saw the note dropped, and I also. I possessed myself of it—read it.”

The Countess, who had burst into tears, waved with her hand a negative.

“ Then I will read it to you, for it is necessary you should know how sure I am of your guilt, and the steps I have taken to be revenged. Start not ! if my revenge was in murder, I should make myself my own victim—now, all that first agitated me with a mother’s love is past, and all the devil of a jealous woman is uppermost. Listen !” Here she read, with a marked emphasis, every word slowly and distinctly ; whilst the Countess, doomed to undergo the torture, and learning from the note the cause of Montague’s distant behaviour, and also his declaration of his undying affection, the blood forsook her cheeks, and she fell back in the chair, as pale as snow. For a moment the Duchess stopped ; then resuming her task until the last word, she carefully folded the note, and concealed it in her dress—“ Now hear the rest. The letter I sent to the King, your lover withheld. This day, I dispatched a courier to his Majesty.”

“ My father !” shrieked the Countess.



“I must bear that reproach, for that false Ambassador, I know, betrayed the secret, and, to gain my daughter, used it as an excuse for her fall. I told you that all the reproach was due to me ; heap it again and again upon me—crush me with that infamy—hate me ! spurn me ! despise me !”

“My mother ! oh, my mother !” said the Countess, as she threw herself at her parent’s feet, “spare me these cruel words ; never shall the secret pass my lips.”

“Raise yourself, child ; this is no time for weakness in either of us ; the secret was only worth keeping lest you should know it. The child aware of the parent’s infamy, dissolves half the ties of nature, the other half has snapped from jealousy.”

“I do not understand you !”

“But you shall before we part. It is my duty not to screen myself—and fearlessly I tell you, that the woman who yields to a King is as culpable as those who debase themselves to meaner people. Your rank and my own are the results of my wickedness, and well shall we both reap in sorrow what was sown in crime. It is to stop you in your career, lest one born of you should live to curse you, as you will yet curse me.”

“Never—never, while I live, shall such a word pass my lips. I feel ashamed to meet your



glance—I tremble in your presence—and in all you excuse me to accuse yourself.”

“This is the painful duty which devolves upon me, since you have become informed of your birth; but if your father has yet one spark of feeling in his heart, how will he bear the tidings of his daughter’s dishonour! For some time this has been whispered in Paris, until it has grown into murmurs loud and intelligible. How long do you imagine the rendezvous could be kept without the remarks of your servants?—when three know a secret, who is safe? Even the old woman, paid not to look, could not altogether avert her eyes—the young Countess of Sussex would be traced to the door, the bubble would burst, and the reputation would be lost. You love him?—speak!”

“I confess I love him.”

“I will not ask you to confess what this note too plainly indicates.”

The Countess held down her head, and her tears dropped on the carpet.

“Poor, dear child! so early led astray—so soon following in the path I fain would have obstructed. I, who have committed the same error, dare not rebuke you, and cannot point the finger of scorn, for that must be pure, to be repulsive; but I have still authority, and will use it.

“Now, child, on your knees promise me

never again to allow Mr. Montague's approach—never to write, or in any manner hold intercourse with him, but to spurn him from you." The Countess remained silent. "Do you wish me to bare my heart, and show what must be your feelings hereafter? I call upon you to renounce him. What! still silent!—still, after what I have said, so fascinated by this serpent, that no words of mine can shake the ascendancy he has obtained over your affections! Then I will do a mother's last duty, whatever may be the shame in the avowal. Read that!" and the Duchess handed her daughter a letter.

"My eyes so swim in tears, dear mother, that I cannot see a letter! Read it to me."

"That I could never do—neither could I hear you read it aloud. Dry your tears, and make your eyes save your heart, your honour, your reputation, and mayhap your life."

Urged by this unusual appeal, the Countess took the letter. No sooner did she perceive it was Montague's hand-writing, than her eye-balls seemed to blaze with heat, and the tears were dried—it was to her mother. Oh! fatal discovery! Her heart beat fearfully; nor did she heed the deep sobs of her parent, who now had covered her face with her hands, and wept in all the sincerity of sorrow. The Countess could scarcely hold the paper—her trembling increased

as she proceeded—her eager eyes seemed to run forward before the mind could receive the impression of the sense, until, at the conclusion, she gave one loud, piercing shriek, and fell prostrate on the floor. The dreadful truth had been revealed!—she was the rival, the supplanter of her own mother! That blow had overcome all fortitude—all affection; and she, unable to bear this dreadful discovery, swooned upon the floor.

At this moment, the huge folding-doors were thrown open, and the servant announced “*l’Ambassadeur d’Angleterre.*” The Duchess instantly recovered herself, and, advancing from the sofa, stood at the feet of her daughter. The doors were closed, and Montague, guided by the blaze of the fire—for there was no other light in the room—directed his advance by the flame; and seeing the tall figure of the Duchess, began a set speech.

“Look here, sir,” interrupted the Duchess; “behold your work!—there is my daughter at my feet.”

“Dead!” said Montague, as he recoiled a step. “Who has done this deed?”

“You!—your letter to me of the day before yesterday. I would rather she died at my feet, than recovered to be aware of our infamy. Leave my house this instant, for I could not trust my-

self in your presence ; but a fearful vengeance is prepared for you !—you, who have violated every promise made to your king and to myself !—Look, I say, at your work !”

Montague, somewhat surprised, soon recovered from his astonishment ; and, kneeling down by the side of the Countess, placed his hand upon her forehead. “ She has fainted—that is all. If she is laid flat on her back, and her forehead chafed, she will soon recover. You had better aid her, or summon your servant.”

The cool manner in which this was pronounced seemed to convert the Duchess into a statue. Montague came prepared for a scene, and half suspected this had been previously arranged. His visit was to lull the mother—for he felt convinced that one quarter of an hour’s conversation would effect this.

“ Must I be still cursed with your presence, and has a woman no protection from insult ?” said the Duchess. “ Then I must hazard publicity, rather than she should recover to see you.” She rang a small bell instantly ; the large doors were opened. “ The Ambassador’s carriage,” said the Duchess, in a stately voice. “ And bid the Countess’s maid to come instantly !” She bowed to his Excellency, with all the coolness of an accustomed courtier, who smiles whilst his heart is breaking, and the Ambassador was literally forced from the room.



“Au revoir!” said Montague, with nonchalance—“à demain!”

No sooner was he gone, than every assistance was rendered to the Countess. The whole scene had not occupied two minutes, nor had Montague missed the only opportunity afforded him; as he knelt down to the Countess, he contrived to slip a small note into her dress. On the Countess's removal to her room, it was requisite to place her in bed: the mother, recollecting that Montague's letter had fallen on the floor when her daughter fainted, ran to re-possess herself of it; whilst the maid, who aided her young mistress in this horrid intrigue, drew the Ambassador's note from its hiding-place, and concealed it in a small box.

“Your page, madam,” said the servant, “wishes to see you.”

“Bid him come instantly, and shut the door. Well, sir,” she inquired, “have you done the duty required of you?”

“I have, my lady. The man was charged to deliver a letter from the Duchess into the King's hand. He rode for his life, nor would he tell me more.”

“Go! he has told enough to confirm all my worst fears and apprehensions,” and bursting into a flood of tears, she added, “and I am prepared to die.”



## CHAPTER XV.

MONTAGUE, alarmed at the first discovery, soon regained his usual serenity. "She will never dare speak of it," he argued to himself. "The King would be more incensed against her than ever; besides, I have her own letters, in which she has committed herself to the utmost. What is she to gain by giving publicity to this event? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but revenge; and there, I own, I feel alarmed. No hungry tiger will face greater perils for its food, than will a woman to gratify revenge. I can soothe the King. This is a summer cloud, which will soon pass away. The Duchess cannot continue in Paris without my protection and surveillance; and, when this hasty gloom is dissipated, the sunshine of apparent kindness will somewhat restore us."

Brett was made a participator in the circumstance, and he, following the custom of that loose

age, regarded the whole affair as a most desirable conquest, and felicitated his worthy master on his success. "It was hardly worth a serious consideration; for how can the Duchess implicate you with the King, without betraying herself?"

"Oh! my dear Brett," said the Ambassador, with familiarity, "if a woman once determines to gain a point, she will not be nice about the means she employs. This Duchess is a real virago."

"Your Excellency is a match for all the viragoes in existence; and I feel convinced you will withdraw yourself from one of these intrigues with consummate prudence and skill. I have been thinking that it would be well if your Excellency were to accompany Count Konigsmark to the court. It will at once show that no suspicions were ever entertained against him, and that it was so considered by his Majesty of England, who took a lively interest in this affair. This will better account for his being patronised by you now; for, after all is considered, it seems curious to entertain a man at the embassy who was placed at the bar as the murderer of the Ambassador's son-in-law."

"Talk of the wisdom of Locke!" ejaculated Montague—"Brett, my worthy friend, your equal in resources does not exist. He shall go with me this evening. I presume the Duchess will

not venture to the court, and the Countess will, for a time, weep over the discovery. By my faith, Brett, that woman must have had the glasses arranged in her salon purposely to mark every action which occurred ; and yet, I will wager my head, she never saw me place the note in her daughter's dress. Thirty thousand pounds, Brett—a good round sum, and worth a little risk. I will take Konigsmark to the court to-night.”

Konigsmark had been received well by the Countess of Northumberland, and, although he did not live entirely at the embassy, had the entrée, which was at this moment denied to everybody else. He cheerfully obeyed the summons of Montague, and that evening went to Versailles. On his former visits, it has been mentioned that the Count was well introduced, and had received attention from his Majesty. He now went dressed as a colonel of cavalry, and as a French subject.

The news of the murder had scarcely attracted notice at that gay scene of dissipation and vice. Men in those days disappeared suddenly, and curiosity seldom ferreted out the reason. Some remarked that the Swede was a bold man for the attempt ; others hinted that the circumstance would make a decent tragedy ; and all expressed a wish to see the man who hatched the plot. It never occurred to any of the higher classes to

exclude Konigsmark from society, or to brand him as a murderer. The court had acquitted him; Thynne's own monarch had expressed himself gratified at the acquittal, and no translator had thought the subject either sufficiently new or exciting to translate into the French papers all the nice points of the English trial. Louis XIV. received him well; he was complimented on his personal appearance by the ladies; and his fame for desperate actions in all countries made him a kind of lion even in Paris.

"See!" said one old French gentleman to a fat Abbé, "that is the Swede who murdered the husband, in order to wed the widow."

"Ah, *farceur*!" replied the Abbé, and walked on.

In the course of the evening, his Majesty himself condescended to make some remark to Konigsmark, which afterwards grew into a more interesting conversation. His Majesty spoke of the dispatch which Konigsmark had taken from Malta to Alexandria two years previously, and complimented him upon the execution of a service much more hazardous than the Count had believed when he undertook it; after which, his Majesty remarked—"I have a service of the same kind for you to perform, in three or four days; and you might," continued the King, with an affable smile, "make



a slight detour on your return, and visit Amsterdam."

Konigsmark made no answer, but bowed lowly.

"You will hear of this again," continued the King; "and perhaps you had better apprise the English Ambassador of it."

Montague, in the mean time, was playing the man of fashion and of the world to some of the ladies who thronged to the court. All knew of his kind protection of the Duchess, and many suspected the intrigue with the Countess; but Montague was a man who enjoyed bantering with a woman's fame; and with his ceaseless wit and careless levity he beguiled many a moment. In vain the brilliant women of the court attacked him; he turned aside their poisoned arrows, or retorted them on the unhappy archers, apparently without malignity, but always with a double meaning. Montague was a wonderful favourite with the ladies, and he knew how to maintain the supremacy he had acquired.

"The King," said Konigsmark, "has desired me to be in readiness to take a dispatch to the Princess ——."

"What can this mean?" said Montague.  
"When are you to go?"

"In a few days."

"Then it is of small import, and may serve our turn. Should the Lady Ogle not have left



Amsterdam, you can enforce our request of her society in person."

"So the King appears to think," replied the Count, "for he gave a hint as to that."

"Ah!" ejaculated Montague; and then he murmured to himself, "Treason in the camp; the Duchess suspects this, and has laid the train. What's in the wind now, I wonder!"

"It will not, I trust, interfere with our arrangements."

"Not in the least; in fact, the King seems, by placing you near her, to forward our views; the sooner this takes place the better; and it will seem more lover-like to go to the lady, than to allow the lady to come to you. Have you ever read Richard the Third, as written by Shakespeare?"

"Never!" replied the Swede. "My time has been employed in wars, and I have never had leisure to read anything but books of witchcraft."

"You might get a hint from that play—yours is a somewhat similar case to the Duke of Gloucester's, and he succeeded." (Here Montague, who evidently had been thinking aloud, became aware of his absence of mind, and turned the conversation on the beauty of Lady Ogle.) "I presume, Count, you do not much value the colour of the hair in your wife?"

"Not a stiver!" replied the Count.

“Nor the complexion of the cheeks, nor the elegance of the form?”

“I never quarrel with Nature about Nature’s works.”

“You deserve to be the richest man in Europe. Never quarrel about trifles—a woman’s beauty is good as an attractive power, but after marriage ceases to be essential. Temper is more desirable than appearance, and a woman strictly brought up in the ways of religion and modesty is inestimable.”

Konigsmark, who knew Montague well, imagined that he had gone mad, or was about to practise some diplomatic art upon him; but he was mistaken: Montague was delivering himself of all the virtue he possessed in the few words he uttered.

“You will let me know the instant that his Majesty desires your attendance, for it would be well for you to go with letters from the Countess and myself; this will be an excuse for your visit, which one so fertile in the art of love will not fail to turn to advantage.”

“I shall take care to inform you of the time; and many thanks for your kindness.”

“They are not needed. We shall, I presume, see you to-morrow at the usual time?”

“I shall be punctual. Good night!”

The carriage stopped at the English embassy,

and Konigsmark had taken his departure, when he was somewhat attracted by the suspected surveillance of a page, who was evidently hovering about the embassy, and who gained admittance before Konigsmark had withdrawn far from the house. It was late, and the circumstance, however trivial, excited in him a desire to know the reason of this great caution in entering a house generally accessible to all; and he loitered about near a distant corner, but still close enough to remark any one who came out of the house.

The moon was up, and the night had the genial warmth of a Paris spring; besides, the Swede had no affair on hand—nothing desperately exciting—and he preferred seeking some adventure in preference to retiring quietly to bed. But few were in the streets, and these passed rapidly; the shops were closed, and the busy hum of men entirely subsided.

Not long did Konigsmark remain, nor was he slow to discover Montague, who, preceded by the page, took a direction contrary to that where the Count was stationed.

Konigsmark felt somewhat ashamed of enacting the spy: the man who concocted a murder, and waited to see its quiet execution, still knew that peeping and prying was dishonourable, and what was more, felt it; he nevertheless resolved to ascertain for what cause his Majesty's minister perilled

his precious life in the dark dull streets of Paris, when the rest of the world had retired to rest.

Montague was wrapped in a large cloak, and proceeded nimbly on his course; the Count followed at a considerable distance. Having passed the bridge, the page and the Ambassador gained the Rue St. Honoré, and arrived at the hotel of the Duchess of Cleveland. Konigsmark, on seeing them enter, laughed within himself at his folly, for Montague's protection of the Duchess was as well known in Paris as any of the numerous court intrigues; but yet this was an unusual affair, and there was some mystery in this midnight visit. Had his Excellency not returned home, there would have been little beyond his general practice.

A vague kind of apprehension came over the mind of Konigsmark, and this, with his usual command of heart, he threw off; but since Thynne's death, he had never felt himself the man of iron nerve he was before; there was blood upon his hands, and not that shed in honourable war, where men are licensed murderers and spoliators, and where the more killed, the greater the heroes. Oh! folly beyond imaginable folly, wherein, for the caprice of a monarch or the whirlwind of popular momentary excitement, thousands upon thousands are slaughtered, inveterate hatred engendered, millions expended, and millions impoverished—all to be consoled



by the word "peace"—and all to suffer, for years and years to come, under the awful fiat of taxation !

Not long had Konigsmark to wait : a shriek was heard ; the small door of the heavy *porte cochère* opened, and Montague sped with the activity of a harlequin ; a female voice was heard shouting "*à la garde!*" and "*au secours!*" which sounded loudly in the stillness of the night.

In an instant, lights were seen at the different windows, and Konigsmark, well aware that the city was patrolled by troops of soldiers, and that an escape for his Excellency was doubtful, immediately resolved to hazard his own liberty, in order to preserve that of his friend. He followed the minister with the speed of youth, and scarcely had they gained the bridge and crossed it, than they were aware that the hounds were on the track ; voices were heard calling aloud to stop the fugitives. At this time, Konigsmark had come close to Montague, who, believing himself captured, for he could run but little then, prepared to announce his rank.

"Turn to the left, or take the Rue de Lisle," said Konigsmark. "I will be the hare for these booted and heavy laden soldiers to hunt."

Montague took the hint ; he was a man who would allow any one to be sacrificed for him ; he therefore shrunk behind the projection of



a huge *porte cochère*, and, having witnessed the pursuit of his friend, he drew a long breath, which he much required, and, wondering how people could be such fools as to interfere to save any one at the risk of a night's uncomfortable lodging, he quickened his pace and gained his own hotel.

In this, Montague had been the dupe of the Duchess, who, having remarked that the Countess was in better spirits than a woman should be under her first discovery, confided to her maid her apprehensions, and bade her, by artful words, nay, further—by promises and soft embraces, to gain from the page any command he might receive.

The Countess of Sussex, accustomed to send her billets-doux by this messenger, never enforced any particular silence, for fear of arousing suspicion, but merely bade the page deliver a note to the Ambassador. The servant of the Duchess, perceiving the boy arranging himself to go out, soon gained the intelligence, which was not attempted to be concealed, and at once conveyed it to her mistress.

The rez de chaussée inhabited by the mother and the daughter formed two sides of a large square, and the window of the Duchess's room commanded that of her daughter. There was but one

entrance for both suites of apartments, although a communication had been made by the rooms.

Suspecting that Montague, who had often visited her in this clandestine manner, would attempt the same with the young Countess, the Duchess resolved to mar his enterprise, and, by his capture, insure a discontinuance until the daughter was removed to England. She therefore extinguished her light, and, sitting by her window, watched with exemplary patience for the page's return. She brooded over her revenge ; for where is the woman who is convinced of fading charms, and finds a rival in her own daughter, who can sink into insignificance without a struggle ? Nay, it is but giving the Duchess the only remaining virtue which still existed in her depraved mind to remark that, in all her letters to the King, still extant, and during every conversation with the young Countess, she had endeavoured to train her against the general levity of the age, and to seek happiness in virtue ; being well aware that it never flourished long in vice.

Montague's discovered letter convinced her that now words were of no avail, and the Duchess was too intimately acquainted with the human heart to believe that criminal attachments with the young can be snapped in a moment ; she

felt assured that the Countess would send a declaration of still existing love, and would be led by the advice of Montague—he of whom it was said, “that he required but half an hour’s conversation alone with the most pious of the sex, to convert her either into a heretic or into a willing accomplice in intrigue.”

Montague, on entering the square, bade the page go quietly to his mistress and apprise her of his visit, and, during the long time in imagination that the page was absent, Montague approached the window of the Countess’s room. The Duchess had now the game in the snare; she passed rapidly into her daughter’s room, and, before the page could deliver his message, the Countess was led to her window; the Duchess opened it cautiously, and both beheld a man on the point of entering it. The Countess, really surprised, for her note had not invited this visit, screamed “*Au voleur !*” whilst the Duchess, feigning desperate fear, shouted and shrieked louder, “*à la garde !—au secours !*” Montague, seeing that it was useless to stay, retired instantly; the sleepy porter pulled the cordon, and the Ambassador escaped.

Konigsmark, once alive to a frolic, young, active, and vigorous, quickened his pace when he left Montague, in order to draw the pursuers from him with greater certainty; and, resolving

to have a little amusement before he was locked up, if it suited these guardians of the night to take him into custody, continually allowed them to near him, and then, darting away with increased velocity, he took some narrow dirty street, leading his pursuers through half the mud and mire of the metropolis, until himself worn out, when finding that he was cut off by a new party who were coming up to the chase, he quietly walked up, and was apprehended.

His dress and his manner arrested any rudeness, and on the officer taking him to the nearest guard-house, he discovered in his prisoner the commander of his own regiment. Those who first pursued, and who came panting in at the death, were dismissed, and Konigsmark, ordering some champagne, assured his junior that it was an intrigue—only an intrigue—and that to-morrow the parties would declare he was not the man. It was requisite that a report should be made, but the circumstances were such as would excite much laughter. Having assured his officer that he would attend the next morning, he bade him keep good watch during the night, and retired to his own lodgings, which he had taken the precaution to near before he gave himself up.

The next day it made a story for the amusement of the court, that Konigsmark had supplanted the English Ambassador, and was



caught coming out of the Duchess's window, and every soul believed it—such are ever the gossips of society, and thus does invention stifle truth. Montague's name was never mentioned in the affair; and the Duchess fixed the scandal upon herself by the resolute denial of all acquaintance with the Count.

## CHAPTER XVI

Altogether, who turned all occurrences to his own advantage, in his private letter to the King, remarked upon the extraordinary behaviour of the Count, and his willingness to put those who had made public exhibition either of talent or talent, make themselves conspicuous; thus he related, "your Majesty will be as much surprised as shocked at the behaviour of the Duchess of Cleveland. No sooner had Count Konigsmark returned to Paris than she resumed an acquaintance with the Countess, and encouraged him so warmly, that the Count was found under the window of the Countess of Saxe, evidently having mistaken the locale. The alarm given by the latter lady, whose character for chastity has been the subject of the Count's letter to the King, and after a desperate pursuit, he was captured by a party of his own regiment. I cannot



## CHAPTER XVI.

MONTAGUE, who turned all occurrences to his own advantage, in his private letter to the King, remarked upon the extraordinary fickleness of the sex, and their willingness to court those who, by any public exhibition either of talent or valour, make themselves conspicuous ; thus he related, “ your Majesty will be as much surprised as shocked at the behaviour of the Duchess of Cleveland. No sooner had Count Konigsmark returned to Paris than she resumed an acquaintance with this desperado, and encouraged him so warmly, that the Count was found under the window of the Countess of Sussex, evidently having mistaken the locale. The alarm given by the latter lady, whose character for chastity has been the admiration of the Court, obliged the Swede to fly, and, after a desperate pursuit, he was captured by a guard of his own regiment. I somewhat

marvelled that one so recently suspected in England of a murder should involve himself in such an intrigue, more especially as I had myself counselled him to be of guarded manner in Paris, and had taken him to the Court, as your Majesty had publicly expressed an opinion of his innocence. The Count, by this, has gained some unenviable notoriety, but the Duchess has been severely censured."

Montague, quite aware of the contents of the Duchess's letter to the King, dispatched a man instantly to London with his letter, at the same time making earnest mention of the circumstance that Louis XIV. had desired Konigsmark to be in readiness to convey dispatches of great import to the Court of Holland; and as many discontented English already flocked to that court, vigilance must be practised to arrive at the King's project. "Indeed," (added Montague, who, in all his correspondence, seems to have used especial frankness with his Majesty,) "I have already made some advances to the Count, firstly, by kindnesses, and, secondly, by a promise of reward, if he should place the dispatch in my hands before he leaves Paris. The proposition has not been badly received, and your Majesty may rely upon my utmost exertion to discover the contents."

As this letter left Paris only two days after

the Duchess of Cleveland had dispatched hers, it was possible to arrive at the Court of Whitehall as soon, if not sooner than the first ; for in those days, the passing the Channel in boats, or small fishing smacks, was oftentimes a painfully long affair ; the slightest breeze was sufficient for an excuse : and the captain, by waiting, added a passenger or two to the courier, making all pay exorbitant prices.

This courier was desired not to spare any expense, and, moreover, if he should find the man sent by the Duchess, at Calais, he was to order him to return to Paris directly with his letter ; one to this purport being sent in the handwriting apparently of the Duchess, but which was imitated by Brett. In fact, such was Montague's readiness to avert danger, or to discover an intrigue, that few could rival him ; and he felt convinced that, if the King read the affair with Konigsmark as detailed above, there being every appearance of truth in it, his Majesty would credit his minister, and disregard all the insinuations of the Duchess.

Montague prudently whispered away the character, if any remained, of the Duchess ; it was the subject of much merriment at Versailles, and it lost nothing from the fertility of Montague's invention. He told the anecdote in detail from the communication through the page, and ex-

cited much merriment in the recital of the chase. The latter being strictly true, gave a colour of truth to the other parts, and not a soul believed but that the Count had actually one foot in the chamber when the sudden entrance of the daughter occasioned the discovery. Nor was he sparing on this subject to his monarch—seeking thereby to ruin the Duchess in the King’s confidence. “Her conduct,” he said, “merits your Majesty’s most serious reproof, as calculated to injure the character of the Countess of Sussex. This intrigue with the Count must have been hastily resolved upon, and, coming so immediately after the affair of Thynne, has made that unfortunate subject more commented upon. But it is more in regard to the Countess of Sussex that I press this upon your Majesty ; her fame has been so unblemished, her character so spotless, and her manner so quiet, reserved, and modest, that, up to this period, she has been pointed at as the marvel of her sex. I fear the Duchess will be entirely lost, for although, as your Majesty is well aware, a great latitude is allowed in this licentious capital, as long as the public are not actually informed of the affair, yet those most censurable themselves take the liveliest interest in defaming those who are discovered ; and thus, under the mask of virtue, attempt to conceal their own vice ; and this concealment, so generally adopted,



will now render the Duchess more vulnerable, by her being made the mark for every poisoned arrow."

The Duchess, who joyfully heard the hue and cry, little dreamt that a friend was so near to rescue Montague. She could not conceal her delight, and, to the unsuspecting Countess, it appeared a strange ebullition of merriment, on having escaped the intrusion of some midnight marauder.

"Go to bed, child," she added; "we are well rid of that man. I pray your rest may be good, and your slumbers unbroken. You must get some colour in those pallid cheeks, for his Majesty will be well aware the air of Paris does but little agree with your health, if he sees you thus pale and fatigued. We must not think of the past, excepting to gain experience for the future. Shut the window! I will have the porter better instructed as to his duty. Good night, child!"

The Duchess could not contain her joy; there was a laughing devil in that once beautiful countenance; the idea of the English Ambassador scampering through the dirty streets, and finally arrested by the police—locked up for the night—the circumstance whispered to the Countess of Northumberland as a great secret—the affair magnified and embellished to the King, were all too much to be concealed in a naturally wicked



heart ; and she so far forgot her usual pride, as to detail some part of the event to her servant, during the agreeable hour spent in preparing for bed.

Not so the Countess, whose young heart had been led captive by the insinuating Montague. No sooner was her mother gone, than the faithful page revealed the whole affair ; in a moment she comprehended how she was compromised, and suspected her mother, of having been aware of the visit, or of having planned it ; neither did she see how she could avert the blow—for Montague, who knew every inch of the house, the distribution of the rooms, the exact part occupied by the Duchess, could not unintentionally have committed the error. This coming upon the discovery that the man to whom she had foolishly yielded her heart and entrusted her honour was also the protector of her mother ; and that in a parent she had a rival, overcame one of her fragile constitution, and she sank upon her sleepless bed, a prey to repentance and remorse.

It had all been planned by the Duchess ; the maid, who had been instructed to watch the page, had given timely notice to the Duchess, who carelessly added, after hearing the recital of the page's order, “ It is sufficient, Josephine ; but I had forgotten—tell Carlo to inform his Excel-

lency, that the Countess is anxious to see him as soon as possible." And the unsuspecting page, upon being questioned by Montague as to the note, added the above message, and instantly Montague hastened to obey the summons. Thus we draw the curtain for the night.

Early in the morning, and much before the usual hour of such visits, the English minister was announced to the Duchess of Cleveland. Astonished at this intrusion, after the discovery of the familiar intercourse with her daughter, the Duchess hesitated before she went to the salon; then satisfaction at the affair of the preceding night decided her to forget her injury in the gratification arising from the humiliation inflicted on the Ambassador.

On entering her salon, Montague was standing by the fire, apparently unconcerned, nor did he seem the least abashed at the entrance of the Duchess; he saluted her with his usual familiarity, and, placing a fauteuil close to the one he intended to occupy, he begged her Grace would be seated, as he had business of some import to transact, and also that her door might be denied to any—ay, even to the Countess.

This familiarity of manner by no means rendered the Duchess less haughty; she replied, that, if his Excellency had business of importance to communicate, she was constrained to

hear it ; but that, if such was not actually the case, she desired she might be released from the society of one whom she could not but regard with the most marked contempt, and from which she had vainly hoped she was released for ever."

"Madam," replied Montague, "I dare say you are averse to my visits, and I assure you they are far from agreeable to me, since they have ceased to yield you pleasure. You are aware that his Majesty expects from me a true and faithful account of your proceedings; and, in our former hours of idleness and pleasure, I have shown you letters in his Majesty's handwriting—the which has long since been familiar to yourself—in which his Majesty charges me faithfully to execute this unpleasant task. It is on this account that I have ventured, thus early, to intrude my unwelcome presence, and to ask of your Grace some explanation of the extraordinary anecdote which already is current in Paris, and affording matter of laughter to some and regret to others. In the latter, I beg your Grace to include that of the Countess of Northumberland and myself."

"I am not aware how I can enlighten your Excellency on an affair of which I am totally ignorant. Perhaps the Countess of Sussex might be able to give some information."

"Your Grace, I fear, is led by a disposition to ridicule to avoid a more painful subject ; and

since I perceive that you are unwilling to enter upon it, I must briefly preface it. It is reported by the thousand tongues of scandal that, last night, or early this morning, a man was pursued from your Grace's house, the cry of '*A la garde ! au secours !*' having roused the neighbourhood. I perceive the smile on your Grace's lip. I pray you to inform me of this event, as I must, in my correspondence with the King, advert to it."

"I should imagine his Excellency had need of no other chronicler than himself. I trust the representative of a King did not find running through the streets of Paris, pursued by the guard, and the idle loiterers, male and female, of Paris, at all derogatory to the character of an Ambassador?"

The smile of ignorance which spread over the countenance of Montague would have astonished either a lawyer or a play-actor. "I pray your Grace," he continued, "when your mind resumes the even tenour of its way, to forget how I might feel—to relate what did happen." There was a tone of seriousness about this, which somewhat excited the Duchess, who hastily answered—

"When ambassadors of a great country like England forget their situation, and come, like the midnight thief, to break into the house of a



mother to violate the chastity of the daughter, they well deserve the execration of the lowest, and the imprisonment which, I trust, will be of use to your Excellency."

"I am perfectly aware, madam, of your power of evasion, and I flatter myself I am not quite so ignorant as to be deceived. I speak, your Grace, of the arrest of Count Konigsmark, who, at the moment of entering into your Grace's chamber, between the hours of twelve and one, was detected by some of your attendants, a cry raised, the Count pursued, and, ultimately, captured. The *procès verbal* sent to the police was forwarded to me, as affecting your Grace's property—not the violation of your honour; and I know that, however much the Count by some may be suspected of murdering a man, he is not likely to have meditated *that* against your Grace, or to have imagined a theft. As I see the sneer of incredulity on your Grace's lips, perhaps the reading of this may assist your memory."

"You are worthy of being an Ambassador from a kingdom to which, I am well aware, you are a subject. I will read this neat composition." The Duchess began with a bitter sneer, which gradually changed to alarm, and, at the conclusion, her face was suffused with colour. "It is beautifully contrived," she added. "May I ask



what you have paid this poor Swede for his perjury?"

"Madam," said Montague, with great dignity, "I came with the intention of sheltering you, if possible, from the scandal which will arise from this circumstance, and was prepared for all the evasions which an artful woman could suggest; but to have been accused of causing this procès verbal to be drawn up—which must have been done when the Count was captured—and to find your Grace insinuating that I could best supply the intelligence I required, surpasses even what I contemplated, and leaves me only the painful alternative of dispatching this document, signed and sealed by the police, without comment, to his Majesty."

"And perhaps your Excellency will also enclose the note written by the Countess of Sussex, and the message delivered to your Excellency by her page; and as I perceive the fear of my character has rendered you heedless of your own, perhaps the evidence of the porter, to whom your person is well known, of your having entered the *porte cochère* with the page, may somewhat inform the King who was the intended violater of the Countess of Sussex. Your Excellency, I presume, could not have mistaken the window?"

“Madam, I am in total ignorance of your Grace’s allusions. I pray you to keep closer to the subject, which constitutes a grave charge against yourself, as the guardian of the Countess of Sussex. You know full well how attached his Majesty is *to his daughter* (Montague accented this carefully), and you are not unaware of the enterprising character of Konigsmark. This document is a confession of a fact. The soldiers who captured him still hold him in durance. His person is as well known as that of the grand monarque himself; and if your Grace still perseveres in all denial of this, every person of the police, and the guard who hunted the intruder (but I suspect not uninvited), who never lost sight of him for a second, and who ultimately seized him, are ready to testify that he came from this house, scared by the alarm, and that, to avoid compromising you, he endeavoured to elude the pursuit.”

“Women are made bad by circumstances,” said the Duchess; “and your Excellency would ruin the reputation of a saint.”

“Your Grace grows extravagant in the simile; I beg you to be more rational.”

“And pray, to what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?”

“To a due consideration for yourself, and the unfortunate predicament in which you are involved—to a wish, on my part, entirely to hush

up this matter—that you declare, in writing, to the police, that you are ignorant of the person who entered your house—that you cannot possibly swear to his identity—and that you are aware a man of Count Konigsmark's rank would not have intruded to commit any act derogatory to a gentleman.”

“And thus to nullify all future evidence—to be unable to declare to the King that you were the man—to throw a huge mantle over the guilty shoulders of the Ambassador, making his scapegoat release the reward of his perfidy. Know, Mr. Montague, this: There is a boundary over which the most guilty fears to leap; nor will I further involve myself against my conscience. If ever woman had cause to hate a man, that woman is myself, and you are the man. Any compact with you now, any forgiveness on my part, or any conversation with you, would impair the evidence I have forwarded to the King. I have sent your own letter to the Countess *to her father*; and I wonder much that one so astute as your Excellency should have written it, when an *écrivain public* would have done it for a sou, and your handwriting be no longer the best evidence against yourself. I despise you, and I hate you, as once I loved and adored you. The man who has made my own child my rival cannot but be an object of abhorrence. This Swede dare not say

he was invited to this midnight intrusion. I feel innocent, and I dare you to make me appear guilty."

"It is for your Grace to determine," replied Montague, with the most consummate coolness and effrontery. "You well know how far your Grace's character is compromised already, and how disposed all people are to entertain scandal of their neighbours. As far as regards your communication with our blessed sovereign, I have little to fear; I have already prepared his Majesty for its reception, and aroused his suspicions as to your conduct. This procès verbal completes the evidence. And, in conclusion, madam, I must apprise you that, since I cannot but believe this document, with all its circumstantial proofs, I shall be constrained to stop the allowance of his Majesty, until I receive his future commands."

"Your Excellency may retire; and as you will have no longer the excuse of any monetary affairs for your intrusion, I shall, I hope, be spared the necessity of forbidding your admission by my servants. That indignity, for my own sake, I would spare you. My daughter's fortune places me far beyond any immediate want; and the next minister, who will shortly arrive, will pay up my arrears. It is said 'none hate like those who once loved;' I pray you, consider this proverb. I will sum-



mon my servants to attend the door." And here the Duchess, making a very stiff and courtly curtsey, quitted the room.

On the servant answering the summons, Montague carelessly said—"Have the kindness to inform the Countess of Sussex that I am anxious to see her for a moment."



## CHAPTER XVII.

THE Church of Santa Maria de Pie di Grotta is so called from its vicinity to the famous grotto of Pausilippo, and so well known in this age of travelling as to need no description ; it gives the name to a grand annual festival, on the eve of which a concert is given by the magistrates of Naples, to the populace, in one of the public streets, arranged for the occasion.

It was the eve of this festival, when José Vergani had taken leave of the Count de Meraviglia, and on the following day, the money was to be paid, and Isabella restored to her parent.

The Count, finding José Vergani a man who seemed blessed with ubiquity, and who so well guarded himself against all arrest as to defy the miserable police, thought it most prudent to keep his word, and try again the honour of this fearless marauder.

Knowing that on this day the church would be crowded, and that many would loiter about the premises, he took no servant, but, mounting a sturdy horse, rode rather quickly towards his destination. The road was plentifully sprinkled with passengers, and here and there some miserable beggars solicited alms from those about to frequent the church ; amongst these were in truth, the lame, the deaf, and the blind.

The Count was not proof against the misery he observed. It has been said by one who knew human nature well, that charity was more liberally bestowed upon those who had lost a limb, because the giver had some proof of the justness of the claim. In this the Count might have spent a fortune ; it seemed as if all the *stroppiati* had assembled from all parts of Italy, to reap the reward of having been maimed ; and, with a generous hand, the Count dispensed his charity. The blessings of Heaven were invoked liberally, and an inward feeling that the day might prove a blessing to himself was the result of these invocations.

Arriving at the church, he gave his horse to a poor boy, desiring him to walk it slowly about, and, going at once to the indicated altar, he knelt down and made a solemn vow to forget all former injury by Vergani and others, and most piously declared that his vengeance was at an end, and that

he would no longer pursue those who had robbed him of his child. This done, he arose, and looked carefully about the church, but no one approached him ; nor did he see any face with which he was familiar. At last, having waited an hour, he remounted his horse, and slowly pursued his way towards his home. He stopped to relieve a poor man, who, quite exhausted, had been unable to move further towards the church ; and as he did so, a man of small stature, mounted on a rough looking mule, remarked, “ that a day so well begun would end joyously.” The remark aroused the Count, who had given way to a low melancholy foreboding ; he fixed his eyes on the stranger, and in an instant recognised Vergani. At that moment, in spite of his prayers and his determination, a sudden animation overspread his countenance, and the features betrayed the revenge which was not entirely obliterated.

“ I thought,” begun Vergani, in a careless mood, “ that your prayers might have deadened that feeling against your best friend.”

“ It is somewhat of a droll expression,” replied the Count, with a forced smile. “ One, methinks, who has robbed a father of his only child, might have found another word than friend.”

“ Your opinion will be changed before we part, and I rejoice to see a different expression] of countenance ; for, if this business be not con-

cluded before the darkness of night begins, it will never be arranged. Take that lane to the left, Count; it will not carry us far from our road, and we shall be alone. The Count Meraviglia, I know, fears no single man alive, and José Vergani has yet to learn what fear may be. To our bargain—*patto chiaro, amico caro*, is a proverb well known to all who follow my mode of life. We never have debts; ours is a brisk interchange, wherein no credit is given.”

“I have the money with me—here it is. I came prepared to fulfil my promise to the utmost, and to give implicit confidence to José Vergani.”

There was a certain degree of pride visible upon the face of the contrabandist as he answered, “Those who have trusted to me, have never been betrayed. You shall not outdo me in generosity. Keep that money until you are satisfied, and listen to the recital; and when you see the girl, if you are not satisfied she is your child, then our bargain ends, and your money returns to your own coffers. The vow—an audible vow to human ears, as well as supplicatory to those above, I myself witnessed, and I hope may ever be kept. Of what use would my blood be to you? Revenge is a poor spirit, born of pride and nurtured by cowardice.” Vergani said this in a careless manner, swinging himself from side to side on his mule, and jumping over the animal



with all the lightsome activity of a boy. Little would any one have dreamt that in this playful body there existed a heart which hardly ever quickened its pulsation from alarm, and that so little did even the sum of money to be received turn him from his accustomed playfulness, that at the moment it never occupied a thought.

"I accustom the animal to this," said Vergani. "I am sometimes obliged to be off and on in a short space of time."

"The anecdote to which I was to listen with attention, seems to have escaped your recollection," said the Count. "I am aware I must await your humour, although the delay be ever so painful."

"I crave your pardon, Count; but I was wondering where I should build my next house, and wavering between Sicily and Sardinia. You shall not complain again. It is now nineteen years since you were walking with your wife in the princely gardens of Meraviglia. You had not been married then three years, and I will say, with all respect for the rest of us married men, I never saw a picture of greater happiness—excuse me, Count, if I cause you grief. I see your emotion, and I honour the tear which pays this tribute of affection to the memory of brighter and happier days."

"Go on," said the Count, "and I pray you



heed not my emotion, but use your shortest language to assuage my curiosity.”

“At that time I was associated with the celebrated Manfrini—ah, you start! his name was a knell of sorrow wherever it sounded. He was the incarnation of the Devil; from him I caught that recklessness, that disdain of danger, which has saved me a thousand times from a public execution. At the time to which I refer, your child was close to you, in the arms of a maid-servant, and we watched you and the Countess as you gave the little beauty some of the various fruits within your reach. The scene touched my heart, and I remarked to Manfrini, how pleasant it must be to roll in riches, to love and be beloved, and have a child to keep the chain of affection more certainly riveted. Manfrini turned to me, and, with the quick lightning of his eye, made me start as he said, ‘By to-morrow half those riches shall be ours; that scene of delight become one of despair, and the chain be broken. Come this way,’ he replied, as he pointed to a narrow path. ‘Listen:—Our late affairs have been far from prosperous, and, between ourselves, Vergani, our Calabrian associates will not be much pleased at our return empty-handed. Our horses are fleet, our small felucca ready for sea, and the prize is within our grasp, if we have the courage to shut our hands. Now, that quality, so

very useful in our trade, neither of us lack much, so do you, Vergani, draw the Count and Countess forward, whilst I make a dash at that child, and, if I know anything of human nature, the sum that will be paid as a ransom will be better and more portable than half the cargo of a merchantman.' You may remember, Count, your coming hastily forward on hearing groans? I was the person who feigned the near approach of death, and whilst both you and the Countess endeavoured to alleviate my sufferings, the maid was seized and silenced, and your child conveyed away. A whistle apprised me that the deed was done, and I instantly recovered. You promised to go to your house to send me some cordial. No sooner were you at a short distance, than I joined my companion, took shipping from the jutting point where you landed near my cave, and in three days your child was under the protection of the wife of Manfrini. We called it Isabella Manfrini, after the new mother, and in the presence of all our gang, twenty-five in number, we marked the child close under the arm, with a cross. You were not the only father who lost his child, for we found it a vastly profitable trade. The vigilance used to discover your infant rendered it impossible for either Manfrini or myself to venture to Naples; and, in consequence of the wants of our gang, we became more active

in our contraband trade ; leaving the child to become valuable in proportion to its absence from you, and all being resolved to return it for a adequate ransom. You remember the frequent communications you received, and your avowed determination to follow up any discovery with the apprehension and death of the culprit ? We were never very partial to courts of justice, and last night was my finish to any further exhibition before the judge, if I can avoid it.

“ As you became more merciless, we became more exorbitant. You knew that your child was alive, and we resolved to be paid for it. I have kept my promise, for I swore to receive the full amount we proposed, with interest, at five per cent. My demand upon you is, as nearly as I can calculate such a line of figures, correct. I remember leaving at your own chateau a lock of the child’s hair.

“ Time passed on ; we had other affairs to attend to, but yours was never forgotten. At last we made a great seizure, and proceeded to Manfrini’s cottage, which stood concealed in a thick ravine, to be approached only by a narrow slippery path, the windings of which, and the other paths branching from the direct one at every turn, rendered it almost impossible for any but one well acquainted with the locale to arrive at the cottage. Here we all assembled, twelve in

number—the rest had fallen, either by the hand of the public executioner, or in affrays. We had a curious custom, which we borrowed from Corsica. Whenever one of our number was executed in the course of justice, as people call it, the waistcoat of that man was hung by the side of Manfrini's chimney, and was never removed until one of the family who caused either the apprehension or the execution was sacrificed by one of us. In my time, I have seen four waistcoats at once hanging for vengeance. We met at Manfrini's to distribute the booty, and, for a time, to separate, because some troops had been sent to disturb our repose ; there was a vast deal of gold in the cave belonging to the cottage, and some not unpalatable wine ; the sight of the one and the taste of the other did much to excite cupidity and quarrels. How it began, I never could exactly remember ; but a fight ensued ; and I verily believe Manfrini, who was a giant in strength, and who never drank anything but water, excited us all to drink freely of the wine, and, when the quarrel began, made short work of the whole twelve ; for it was noon the next day before those who survived their wounds—and I was the best of them—discovered that Manfrini, his wife, and your child had left the cottage, seized a boat, and trusted to the wind and the rough sea to save them.



“ We also obtained a larger boat, and went in pursuit of a small boat we saw from the summit of one of the hills, a good way off; but we soon got sick of this, and, being fearful of losing sight of land, we tacked, stood in shore, landed, and separated.

“ From that moment to the other day, I never saw your daughter. The mark is upon her, to which I will swear—and so will another, who is now alive. How I again got forward in the world, and made my fortune, is a secret. Your daughter will herself fill up the remainder of the time, and it is for you to be satisfied; I myself have no doubt upon the subject.

“ That’s a good old dog of yours, and knows his friends. From the time your daughter was returned to me by Benvenuto, I have made friends with him. I could have robbed you, and hung you up by the heels a thousand times; and if you had executed one of our men, and the waistcoat had hung by the side of Manfrini’s chimney, long as the time might have been—for our oath extended until our death—you would have dangled from your own trees. I have done. I have told you the whole truth. You will find as beautiful a woman as man could desire to look upon. I know nothing of her life, which I hear has been one of adventure; but you will find a temper rarely equalled—a fine form—a lovely face—eyes



beaming with animation—a countenance expressive of intellect, and with a peculiar turn of the lip, which indicates an unwillingness to forgive an injury. This, I presume, may somewhat favour the conviction that she is your child. We are arrived—you have nothing to fear—Vergani's honour is pledged for your personal safety; and also, that if you are not convinced Isabella is the lost child of Meraviglia, he will not only see you safe from his premises, but in safety to your own. We must dismount here; we shall have no need to lead our animals." He gave a sharp whistle, and an apparently old man, but one evidently disguised, appeared. Vergani only pointed to the animals, and without saying a word walked forward.

The Count was as resolute a man as could be found in those parts. He gave up his horse without a remark, and followed his strange guide. He felt convinced that Vergani would deal honourably with him, for he had refused his money, which he might have taken; and, from the number of nods of recognition made by Vergani to the passers by, there could be no doubt that this active chief had taken every precaution against a surprise.

"Is it far we have to walk?" said the Count.

"About a minute more will be sufficient. There is the cottage—well sequestered, is it not?

I wonder how many thousand times you have passed this road, and never knew that such a place existed. It is here where Manfrini and myself occasionally resided during our active operations in these parts ; and in the very room in which you will be restored to your daughter, did the poor little child sleep the first night it was taken from your protection. But, once more, before we enter the cottage—if you are not satisfied, keep your money ; I can make more of the article in another manner. I deal with you honestly, honourably—because I believe, from your earnest behaviour in the church, of the sincerity of your intentions.”

“ May I see her alone ? for I would not any one were present when I recognise my child.”

“ There is but an old woman *in* the house ; outside we are better provided with attendants. Here,” Vergani continued, as he beckoned to the woman, “ show this gentleman to the door of Isabella’s apartment ; give him the key of the outer door ; let him examine every place, to know that he is alone ; and, having so done, await me at the cross. Follow her, Count, I will loiter about here. I give you one hour from this time, before I summon you.”

With a quick step, the Count gained the cottage, and closed the outer door, having received information of the apartment ; but as he ap-

proached the door he trembled, not from fear, but anxiety. He rapped, and was desired to enter. Before him stood Isabella, an exact image of her mother, at the very age when she died, and dressed nearly in the same garb. Struck with the sight, he was speechless; and Isabella, who fixed her eyes upon the man she believed to be her father, felt unable to advance a step. For a minute or two the Count remained motionless; his eyes alone seemed greedily devouring the charms before him; when suddenly he seized her arm, and baring it, discovered, as described by Vergani, the mark of the cross. This was no sooner seen, than he searched more towards the back, and suddenly falling on her neck, he burst into a flood of tears; faltering, as he said—"My daughter! oh, my daughter!"

Indeed, the Count could not have been deceived, for never was there a greater resemblance than in the child and mother. The Count had tenderly loved his wife. He looked at his child—gazed upon her—and then, as impetuously, embraced and kissed her.

The feelings of the two were different. Isabella could not experience that affectionate attachment for one whom she could not possibly remember, and yet she felt a sudden fondness for the man; but the Count's heart was full, the tears streamed down his cheek, and not a word could he utter,

but "My child—my child!" It had more of pain than pleasure; it was an intense suffering, arising from hope gratified. He pressed her hands, caressed them, gazed upon her face in silence, and seemed lost to all the world but the object before him. It was then that Isabella, in the silvery voice of youth, inclined her cheek to his, and said—"My father!" It broke the spell which entranced him. He kissed her fervently, and recovering himself, he led her gently from the room, desiring her to prepare for her departure; and then, beckoning to the old woman, who watched the outer door with the unsleeping eye of a Cerberus, he bade her summon Vergani. He appeared in a moment.

"A fortnight ago," the Count began, "I should have rejoiced in your execution—now, I bless your presence. Here is our agreed sum, but I shall send you more. I am convinced. Can you assist me to some conveyance for my child?"

"At the gate leading to the road there is one ready. I felt assured you could not be deceived, for she is your child. I need no further money now; but all I ask is your assistance, should I need it hereafter, and the permission to inform you, should I fall into bad hands. Vergani leaves you now, perhaps for ever; and may your vows, this morning made, last for ever in your heart. I have yet a wild life to lead, but never will I



wrong you again. I have fortunately been able to repair the injury of my younger days. Now, fare thee well; I will see you to the carriage, and then, adieu for ever." At this moment Isabella was seen advancing. Her father took her by the hand; Vergani, with the bow of a courtier, kissed the other, and advanced to the gate. At that moment a trusty servant of a certain duke was awaiting Vergani to conclude the purchase of Isabella at any price. Had he arrived one hour earlier, the chances are a million to one that Vergani would have mastered the little virtue he possessed, and sold her to the highest bidder.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT night Vergani embarked with his followers on board Benvenuto's schooner, and was never heard of again in the vicinity of Naples. He has been resuscitated in Auber's opera of the Sirene, and his escape dramatized. He was a man capable of any daring, but never shed blood if he could avoid it. He is known to have done many extravagant acts of kindness, and been concerned in the most desperate deeds of plunder and rapine.

Isabella's account of her life was listened to with much attention by her father, the first evening ; and, although Konigsmark's name was mentioned, it was only as a deliverer. Here, indeed, her ingenuity was somewhat taxed, and she was obliged to wander into the regions of fiction.

After her shipwreck in Calabria, she described

her re-embarking to come to Naples—both Konigsmark and herself having taken shipping at Palermo—that contrary winds forced them near Maritimo, and there, discovering a suspicious vessel, which pursued them, they made all sail to the westward.

The pursuer was declared an Algerine pirate, and every precaution was taken to avoid her. Each vessel seemed to sail nearly the same. The chase continued for three days and nights, and the fourth morning a harbour of refuge was found in Barcelona. There it became necessary to wait for the recovery of her health, which had been impaired by the excitement and the fear of being captured by the Algerines; and from that port she again took ship under the protection of Benvenuto, who was suspected of always being one of Vergani's gang, and who had given Konigsmark to understand that the father of his rescued captive was alive. Konigsmark saw her on board, gave her money, and recommended her to the care of Benvenuto and the protection of Heaven.

Such was her history, after the battle with the Turks. It had enough of truth for a foundation, and not the most rigid moralist could object to a daughter wishing to be received as an innocent girl, and hiding her shame under the veil of ro-

mance. It would have been a cruelty to have rushed into her father's arms, to have declared herself the mistress of the Swede, and to have charged her parent with the fault, as having lost her before she could defend herself.

"I think," said the Count, "it would be prudent to travel for a year or two, your sudden appearance, the splendour of our house, your marked beauty, would only excite envy, and make you the mark for all detractors."

"My father's wishes are mine. I am ready at any moment. I am too insignificant, I hope, to excite envy, and have little to fear from detractors."

Isabella was conducted to a splendid apartment; servants attended her bidding, and all the luxuries of life seemed showering upon her. She valued not one of these, excepting as making her more beloved by Konigsmark. He was engraven on her heart—for him she had sacrificed all a woman holds most dear, and now, with riches, noble birth, a high and powerful family, she hoped to win him to her as a husband. The proposition made by her father accorded exactly with her own wishes. She was certain that her faithless lover was in England, and she believed her ascendancy over him so decided, that, to be once in his society, she should recover his love, and

become his wife. She excused, as a generous woman can excuse, all his faults ; she attributed his sudden desertion to imperative necessity ; and his daring deeds, his quick active disposition and mind, irresistibly won him her heart. It was a sleepless night—one devoted to the thought of him who, at that time, was planning the murder of a husband, to obtain his wife. Isabella was jealous, and, with the warm Italian blood, and nurtured in scenes of savage revenge, she was capable of any deed ; but, loving as she did, she kept down the fiend which occasionally seemed prompting her to hatred. No ; in Konigsmark she saw her fancy realized—no other being alive could share her heart ; all, all was centered in him. He was bold, daring, brave, his name had become European ; he was a favourite at all courts, admired by all women, quick in advance, and ready in reply. A warrior of fame, and still a musician, as stern in command, as melodious in his warbling ; he delighted by turns in the roll of the drum, the blood-stirring sound of the trumpet, and the tinkling of the guitar. Love and war were his idols ; he cared not for money or wine ; his whole soul was in battle and in intrigue. That such a woman, with an Italian soul, nurtured amongst pirates, and rescued on the brink of destruction, should love, and love ardently, cannot surprise. Now she was free, rich, rein-



stated in rank, and she gave way to her love with all the warmth of the climate of which she was a native. Panting again to see the only man she cared to see, she had recourse to those innocent female arts, such as pretending reluctance, yet yielding to the wish of a parent. She took up his idea—began to fear the quick tongue of malice—was apprehensive of exciting jealousy, and dreaded to be approached by Vergani, who, she well knew, was aware of her secret, and to whom she owed, as the price of her liberation, a large sum. Seldom, if ever, she moved from the house, and then only in the vicinity of it; the fear of a recapture was the ostensible reason. In every conversation, she invariably turned it upon the delight of seeing foreign nations, and so urged on the Count, that, early in March, it was resolved to set out, and journey by short and easy stages.

There required but little preparation, for the Count had been accustomed to hardships and privations, and from the time of the death of his wife, had not rolled in splendour, or been enervated by luxury.

On the 27th of February, they set forward, leaving behind them the splendid estate of the once powerful Meraviglia; the dog, and one or two old servants being left in charge.

It was about four days after Montague's visit



to the Duchess of Cleveland, that Konigsmark arrived at the embassy, and demanded immediate admission.

“I come,” he said, “from the King. I am ordered to proceed direct to Holland, and afterwards to ——.”

“And the dispatches?” said Montague.

“Are to be given to me at St. Denis. Orders have been sent forward that horses are to be in preparation, nor am I to loiter on the road.”

Montague fixed his eyes upon Konigsmark, as if to read, in that index of the heart, if his words were true.

“You suspect me,” said the Swede, “and why? Am I not bound up in your welfare—does not everything which gives you power give me also a better protection? I have told you the truth; in three hours from this time, I must be in front of the Church of St. Denis. If you have still doubts, come with me.”

“You say rightly, what gives me power assists also your projects. I will be plain with you: I am fearful that the Duchess of Cleveland’s messenger has succeeded in arriving in England, and that her letters will reach the King; he is still somewhat attached to her, and is of so variable a complexion, that he may turn to her again, with as little thought as when he discharged her; if he does, my downfall is certain. Charles would

sacrifice his best servant for his worst woman. Still, if I could give him further information as to the movements of the French king, the intelligence might keep me some time longer in my tottering seat; therefore it is that I would arrive at the contents of these despatches, which must be of great import. I leave this to you."

"I have but one reply to this—whatever is entrusted to my honour, nothing shall tempt me to violate. The King selects me as his most trustworthy servant—shall I prove myself unworthy of his confidence? Why has he selected the front of the church of St. Denis? Because he knew I should then have left Paris, and the despatches be safe. No—no, your Excellency, whatever I could do honourably—that is, as a bargain—I will do; but letters confided to my trust shall never be opened."

Montague looked at him with surprise.

"You seem astonished at an honest sentiment emanating from myself. Why so? I bargain with you for the hand of Lady Elizabeth—what is there dishonourable in that? I have fought the battles of various nations; you may say I am a hired murderer, as mercenary troops may always be called, but is it reckoned dishonourable? I have pledged my faith a hundred times—has your monarch done less, or yourself either? I have run great risks——"

“Yes—yes, Count,” said Montague, interrupting him, “and had narrow escapes.”

“Such as your Excellency experienced the other night, in the affair of the Countess of Sussex.”

“The Duchess of Cleveland, I assure you, Count——”

“I fancy you are too well known to her, to cause a hue and cry. Never mind this—the despatches, once in my possession, I will guard with care; if you can get at them before, that is your affair. But light as I hold my honour in regard to women, I never have sullied it, either in war, or when confidence has been reposed in me.”

“What various significations that word honour must have!” said Montague, with a smile.

“It is true. One can honourably sell, and another as honourably buy, even if it is a step-daughter. The man who, for conscience sake, and the fear of committing a crime ‘forbid by heavenly, fined by human law,’ abstains from it, gains nothing in the world’s estimation for honour. Let him commit a murder in a duel, or punctually pay a debt which has been contracted by his being swindled, he is highly honourable. In intrigue, the word is never used; but we read often of an honourable messenger, and I pray your Excellency to consider me as such.”

“At any rate, Count, use all honourable

means to arrive at the contents of these despatches."

"Of that you may rely."

"Here are letters for Lady Algernon and Lady Ogle. That affair can hardly fail. They are strongly written in your behalf. If I could counsel so desperate a lover as Count Konigsmark, I would advise his travelling with them to Paris. Travellers, like sisters, soon discover tempers ; and there are a thousand minute circumstances to be turned to advantage, a thousand little attentions to be paid, wants discovered, and remedies offered. I shall await your letters and return with much anxiety."

"Then, fare thee well, kind Ambassador ; my word of honour is pledged to the performance of my promise in the event of my success, and I hope we may pass the spring comfortably in Paris. I have no further time but to repeat—Good by." Konigsmark mounted his horse, and, taking the route by the Fauxbourg St. Denis, was within an hour at the place of rendezvous.

Never did Konigsmark grieve more over the loss of Vratz than now ; but the name or the person never occurred to his memory without a secret awe. The last words written by his once faithful retainer he kept always about him ; a kind of superstitious fear prevented his destroying them ; and sometimes, when his mind



reverted to the scene of the Lapland witches, the Egyptian sorcerer, and the ring, he fell into his usual belief, that his fate was predestined. The fate predicted for Borasky, "that he should die a vile death for a deed done for another," had come to pass, and the dying man who foretold that "the hand *he* had dishonoured, should strike the fatal blow upon himself," made his flesh creep with apprehension. To what hand could this allude? and how could Lady Elizabeth Percy, the star of his destiny, as he believed, lead him to destruction? Musing over these things, and with vivid recollections of scenes at Madrid, he stood by the side of his horse, with his hands upon the saddle-bow, and his face resting upon them. Suddenly, he was startled from his reverie of former days. An officer in uniform touched him slightly on the shoulder.

"Quick, sir," he said, "his Majesty awaits you."

Konigsmark hastily replied that "his orders were to remain where he was."

The stranger answered, as he directed Konigsmark to a carriage, "Quick, sir; his Majesty is not accustomed to wait."

From the hand of the King, Konigsmark received a small packet, with these injunctions—"Deliver it into her own hands, and await her answer, but return not without it; if she hesi-



tates, urge her, and remember that Count Konigsmark communicates only with the King of France."

Konigsmark bowed lowly. The King drove on towards Paris, desiring his attendants to go quickly through the town in which he was to be buried. And strange was the abhorrence of Louis XIV. in this respect. He dismantled the splendid palace of St. Germain, far—far superior in point of situation to that of Versailles, which he selected, merely because he could see St. Denis from the windows of the former, and distinctly observe the spire of the church, in the vaults of which he was to be interred. The greatest minds have always some littleness. Never was beauty of climate and of view more sacrificed for a childish abhorrence, than in this case.

Konigsmark rode briskly forward, attended by one servant.

On the evening of that day, a letter was delivered to Montague, from Lady Algernon. It ran thus :—

"The Countess of Northumberland's letter to her daughter has occasioned me much surprise ; for although it is natural enough that a mother might wish to see her child, and one whose education has been so cared for, and whose manners are so proper, yet I cannot allow her to be involved in the levity of Paris society, and liable to

meet the murderer of her husband. An account of the trial has been forwarded to me, and, although the King rejoiced, and the judge favoured, *I* am not convinced. Would it become the heiress of all the Percies to commune with a man whose associates were hung for murder? That point admits of no doubt—and the murdered man her own husband! I hear your Excellency has taken this Swedish Count to the court of the Grand Monarque, to whom I beg you will present my respectful duty—a duty such as a subject of a great country may owe to any foreign king; for, being a near relation of the heiress of all the Percies, I may claim the honour of the acquaintance of the French sovereign. I shall, as soon as convenient, return to England, and shall take care that the next marriage is somewhat more suitable to my granddaughter's rank than a rich plebeian. I have desired the Lady Elizabeth—for I cannot call her by the degrading name of Lady Ogle—to write to her mother, or to direct her lady who attends upon her so to do, should she herself be fatigued. I have the honour to remain your Excellency's friend."

The Countess received a very different letter. Hers contained the news that Lady Algernon thought of returning to England, after paying her respects at the court of Hanover; but that the Lady Ogle would use all her influence to turn

her from that route, and direct her towards Paris. In this letter there was only a trivial allusion to Konigsmark, and none at all to the fate of her second husband.

“Brett,” said the Ambassador, “read this cross-grained old hag’s letter. By the King, my master! we shall be foiled after all. There is reason in what she says, and she is stubborn as a donkey, when once she takes the fancy in her head. The Swede is our only hope; he who would murder a woman’s husband to wed her himself, is not a man to turn lightly from his intentions.”

“The difficulty will be,” said Brett, “to place him in the right track; he believes her to be at Amsterdam, from which place the letter is dated.”

“I have but little hope, Brett. I feel that cloudy presentiment, which seems to threaten a multitude of disasters, and I could be almost weak enough to consult the King’s astrologer. That Duchess will work my ruin if she can—a jealous woman is unforgiving. Then the failure of this affair, all—all seems coming to overwhelm me, but, like a tennis ball, I will rebound the further from the strength of the blow. I have not long parted with the Swede, and he talked about honour as if he were of familiar acquaintance with it. It made me smile to think that one who was

tried for murder, and who must have been protected by witches or fairies, could talk of honour."

"One must talk of something," said Brett, "and a man generally talks most upon subjects of which he knows least ; it is not, therefore, astonishing that the Swede should be profuse of his words. Cannot we send a man to overtake him, and give him this intelligence?"

"He rode briskly away, after receiving his despatches, which the King himself gave. It was my intention to have conversed with him, after he had received his orders, and I went myself to St. Denis. I saw him leave the King's carriage at a gallop, and his Majesty, recognising me, bade me follow until he was clear of the town he abhors, and then held me so long in conversation about the Countess of Sussex, that, when released, I could not have overtaken the Count. Where he is sent to I cannot surmise, but, from what the King said some nights since, the destination, I imagine, must be Holland."

"I think, your Excellency, that the Count, if he finds the birds flown, will write to you, and if he does not write, you may rely upon it he will manage to meet with them. I have no doubt that the King, finding you at St. Denis, at the very place where the man under your protection was to receive his orders, suspected something and therefore entangled you in a discourse."



“It may be, Brett,” said Montague. “What is this?” Here a page entered, and gave the Ambassador the letter of Lady Ogle. “By St. George! we are not lost yet! If Lady Ogle is resolved to visit Paris—and where is the young heart which does not sigh to see it?—she may become restive. She has large fortunes of her own. It would require but a whisper to strengthen her wish—eh, Brett?”

“Another courier might yet save us.”

“Order one instantly, and I will write a letter, which shall either confirm or ruin our intentions. I can bid him follow to whatever place she is gone.”

“Perhaps it would not be amiss to write one to Lady Algernon, saying, that the Count had left Paris by the order of the King; it would have the novelty of truth.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

“THEN it is hereabouts she resides,” said Konigsmark, as he looked at a large red house which overlooked one of the many canals which separate the streets of Amsterdam—“and, if one had time and leisure enough to survey this extraordinary city, its strange appearance might plead an excuse for a residence of some weeks; but that women can delight in such scenes as must meet the eye in the navigation of these canals and dykes, is strange. Go you to the inn, and await my coming; and, as thou art of heavy memory, be careful not to venture abroad without a guide, for the Cretan labyrinth must be about as easy to thread as this strange town; and harkee, sirrah, order me dinner at three, and hold thyself in readiness to depart at any minute.”

The French servant, to whom this was addressed, seemed little inclined to leave his mas-

ter, as the similarity of the streets bewildered him, and, knowing not a word of the Dutch language, he felt afraid of being lost.

“Take that street to the right,” said Konigsmark, “and then the second to the left is that wherein is our hotel.”

After diligent inquiry, Konigsmark at length discovered the abode of Lady Algernon. She was still at Amsterdam; a thousand times had she resolved on leaving, and as often had she declared the season not far enough advanced, and countermanded the order.

Lady Ogle, whose young mind had comprehended the neatness of French dress, was impatient to remove to Paris; but her grandmother had determined not to hazard one so young and one so rich amongst those men so celebrated for intrigue, and in the society of women of notoriously light character. For the first time in her life did Lady Ogle believe herself a free agent, and yet she did not dare whisper her supposed independence. The same stiff behaviour was visible in Lady Algernon, who, dressed in the height of the fashion, reclined in a huge fauteuil. “Lady Ogle,” she began, “I would that you acted more as becomes your rank; I grieve much to see you painting silly flowers, when, for some of the smallest coin, one infinitely better done might be purchased.”

“I must do something, good grandmamma.”

“I have before told you those terms of endearment are much in use amongst the lower orders. It is proper we should be called by our proper titles; it has more of respect and less of familiarity in it.”

“Then, Lady Algernon,” said Lady Ogle, the colour mounting to her cheeks, for she began to show a little of that temper which, in after life, was rather conspicuous—“I must tell you that idleness is not congenial to my taste, neither does this city please me as a residence, neither can I sit still to hear poor gentlewomen read to me. I would act for myself, see for myself, hear for myself.”

“The saints protect her!” said Lady Algernon; “the loss of her plebeian husband has somewhat injured her intellect.” Here Lady Algernon felt the forehead of her charge, and, calling to a servant, bade him go for a doctor of repute.

The servants of that household never dared disobey Lady Algernon; and, although Lady Ogle declared herself well in every respect, Lady Algernon declared she was feverish, and that the heiress of all the Percies was in some danger.

“I tell you, Lady Algernon,” said the young widow, “I begin to weary of this solitude. I own it is kindly meant; but surely I must be the best judge of my own feelings.”

“Poor soul! poor soul!” ejaculated Lady Algernon. “Bid the doctor come quickly!”

At this moment Konigsmark stood by the large portal. Wishing to escape observation, he had changed his dress, and was now habited as a grave Hollander. On the servant’s opening the door to go for a doctor, Konigsmark was the first person he saw, and addressing himself to him, inquired if he could direct him to a doctor.

“You have well selected the person of whom to make the inquiry. I believe, throughout Amsterdam, none is of greater practice than myself.”

“Then walk in here, Mynheer; the great English lady desires a doctor, and she is hasty under any delay.”

Never was adventure more to Konigsmark’s mind; he hated anything which he possessed either without trouble, disguise, or danger. He had little fear of detection, for when Lady Algernon before saw him, he was dressed in the extreme of French fashion, which was at sad variance with the costume of the Hollander. He knew well Lady Algernon’s weak point, and was not fearful of offending her.

On being ushered into the room, the Count bowed lowly, and in the French language, and with French courtesy—for that is most in words



and empty compliments—he surmised that his services were not required for the Lady Algernon, as she was the picture of health.

“ I have sent for you, sir,” Lady Algernon began, “ for my granddaughter, who has suffered much lately from the sudden death of her husband. It needs not that I should detail that event, although the mouths of vulgar men, owing to those vile articles, newspapers, do sometimes mention the name of Lady Ogle. I fear this morning she is somewhat feverish. Bid the Lady Ogle to come to me.”

Lady Ogle thought the best plan to gain her point was to humour her grandmother, and therefore came at the bidding.

Konigsmark bowed respectfully to her, and, without advancing towards her, turned to Lady Algernon, and remarked that the face appeared flushed ; and so indeed it did ; for Lady Ogle, although she did not bring the features of Konigsmark back to her mind, felt a certain indefinable thrill as she stood in the presence of the Count. Fearing he was detected, a sudden redness exhibited itself upon him. He recovered himself instantly, and in most respectful terms solicited permission to feel her ladyship’s pulse. The courteous manner of Konigsmark, his great deference for the opinion of the grandmother, and his respectful bearing, soon placed him firmly



in Lady Algernon's good opinion ; whilst, as he felt the pulse of her whom for years he had considered as his star, and in whom he saw all his future wealth, a slight trembling—not of fear, but perhaps of awe, for the woman whose husband's murder had been compassed by him—seemed to vibrate through the doctor, and communicated itself to the patient.

“ The illness, I should suspect,” said Konigsmark, “ is most in the mind ; but there is a slight fever, which, in these seasons, at Amsterdam, is common with those who are not natives of Holland ; and it is plain to perceive, from the elegant manner, that your ladyship (this he said bowing lowly to Lady Algernon) is from England. Birth, distinction, and manner, are easily recognised.”

Lady Algernon, although it was far from warm, used her fan, and a smile played upon the young cheek of her granddaughter.

“ As the spring advances,” continued Konigsmark, “ this fever becomes more prevalent, and is oftentimes the forerunner of ague ; the young escape the latter more frequently than those who have passed forty.” Konigsmark did not dare venture upon any word half so vulgar as that of “ old.”

A sudden thought struck Lady Ogle that she might turn the doctor to advantage, whilst Lady

Algernon felt afraid that she might become the victim of that disagreeable disorder.

"It would be better, then," resumed Lady Ogle, "to remove from Amsterdam?"

"I should much counsel it, although I do not see any cause to warrant your apprehensions."

"I fear my grandmother is somewhat past forty," said Lady Ogle.

"I should not have surmised it," replied Konigsmark, with unblushing countenance.

It had been Lady Algernon's custom never to leave Lady Ogle in the presence of a stranger; she always felt she had charge of a prize every one was seeking to capture; but, upon this occasion, as doctors are privileged people, and as a little more rouge, with one or two extra *mouches*, might improve the countenance, the doctor was desired to discover the cause and degree of violence of the fever.

Lady Algernon walked in stately pride from the room, ever and anon turning to bow. Here she was outdone by Konigsmark, who kept his head bent lowly down, as if afraid to observe the starched Countess. On her reaching the door, she turned again, and both doctor and countess bowed, whilst Lady Ogle, removed from the sight of her grandmother, mimicked, in a stiff curtsy, and with a fan held to her face, the general manner of Lady Algernon.

Konigsmark had never been seated during this scene ; but Lady Ogle, as if relieved from a great weight by her grandmother's absence, immediately became natural, and desired the doctor to take a chair.

" I fear," began Lady Ogle, " the damps of this town have much injured Lady Algernon's health. She herself is not conscious of it, but to me it is painfully evident."

" Perhaps," said Konigsmark, (knowing his time would be short, without interruption,) " some recent family loss, as I perceive your ladyship is in deep mourning, might have occasioned the change?"

" The loss was nearer to me than to her."

" And doubtless occasioned this fever, which I hope may soon pass."

" It will pass sooner if I am removed from Amsterdam. A drier climate would be more beneficial than medicine."

" Paris is dry and salubrious. I have passed much time in that gay capital ; perhaps that would suit your ladyship's inclination?"

" It is the point at which I aim, but my grandmother is averse to it, and would return to England directly."

" I can urge it discreetly, for it would much benefit my patient."

" I should feel obliged by your so far making

my wishes accord with your own advice. This is a dull place, and even the common topics of the day seldom reach us. Traffic we see there is, to a great extent ; but of intelligence which reaches the court, or events which, in other countries, much interest the public, we have little. What may there be, doctor, to animate the society of Amsterdam ?”

“ But little here ; but there is arrived a man of much European note, the celebrated Count Konigsmark, he who was reported to have murdered one Thynne, a gentleman of fortune, in England.”

“ He never did it, doctor, neither did he conspire to do it ; he was acquitted of the charge. Our monarch publicly expressed his satisfaction, and at Paris he was presented to the King by the English ambassador. I pray you contradict this scandal, which has no truth in it.”

“ It would be well for Count Konigsmark if he saw how anxiously he was defended by so beautiful a counsel.”

“ Do you know where the Count is lodged, and why he comes here ?”

“ It is reported that he took dispatches to the Princess ——, whose husband holds a high military command with the army in Greece, and that he was desired to be in readiness to depart from Paris on the tenth day ; that, being of a restless, inquisitive mind, he visited Amsterdam — the



lady of this murdered Englishman is here, they say."

Lady Ogle, whose name she imagined had saved her being known as the wife of Thynne, was of all hues and complexions during this conversation, which the doctor marked, and rejoiced to find that so far his disguise had favoured him, that he had found the object of his future hopes a strenuous believer of his innocence, and from her manner evidently not ill-disposed towards him.

"I am the widow of that unfortunate man," replied Lady Ogle.

"It would then be more advisable for you, in whose grief I participate, to leave Amsterdam directly. From your high situation, you might meet, by accident, this Count Konigsmark."

"It would in no way disturb me. I knew the Count in England, and am persuaded, firstly, by the acquittal of the jury, secondly, by the King's remark upon his innocence, and our ambassador at Paris taking him to the court, that he must be innocent. Moreover, he was of so gentle a mind—so kind, so affable, so engaging, that I feel assured the pulse of a murderer's heart never beat in his bosom."

"Your ladyship views him with favourable eyes. It is reported, if I can trust my memory, that his object in disposing of your husband was to obtain your hand; and, from your grand-



mother's remark, I attributed this slight fever, which is more obvious now than when I was first introduced, to the excitement which this strange adventure must have occasioned."

"Have you seen the Count, doctor?"

"Once this morning, if I am well informed."

"Did he look oppressed with care, or like one who feared to meet the public gaze?"

"On the contrary, he seemed to court it. Dressed in the uniform of the French chasseurs, his dress attracted notice, which he seemed not to heed."

"You will oblige me, doctor, by not mentioning this conversation on his arrival to Lady Algernon. I fear she is not much disposed to receive him courteously."

At this moment Lady Algernon entered, and the doctor bowed with respectful gravity.

"Have you prescribed for my granddaughter?"

"Physic," replied Konigsmark, with becoming wisdom, "would be of little benefit to the patient; I imagine her malady to arise from the climate of Amsterdam. We live here like amphibious animals, and agues and fevers are common in these months. I would counsel, under your ladyship's approval, a drier climate—some gentle exercise would be beneficial. With your permission, I will call again this evening."

Lady Algernon here tendered a fee, which Konigsmark refused, in a very dignified manner.

“ I have done nothing in the doctor’s art, madam,” he replied ; “ nor can so common and so obvious a remark, that the climate is damp, be considered as medical advice.” Konigsmark bowed more like a soldier than a doctor, and, making also a low reverence to Lady Ogle, retired.

“ That doctor is unlike those of whom we read in Holland ; he has more of the French manner than the Dutch,” began Lady Algernon ; “ he evidently knows the distinctions of rank, and his courteous behaviour was most marked. What said he to you of your malady ?”

“ He declared me slightly feverish ; but nothing to signify ; expressing his apprehension that I might become indisposed if I remained much longer here ; he spoke of Paris as a drier soil.”

“ There is no healthier spot in Europe than the high grounds of Petworth. It would ill become us, after your husband’s murder by that ruffian Swede——”

“ He never did it, grandmamma !” cried Lady Ogle, whilst her face became red with emotion.

“ Ah !” remarked Lady Algernon, gravely ; “ you defend him vehemently. I pray Heaven

you may not be bewitched. I fear the very report that he murdered Mr. Thynne for the love of you, and to obtain your hand, has made you overlook the desperate deed in the object he had in view. Richard the Third, if I remember what my waiting-lady read to me, obtained a hand by the same means. We must go to England ; there he will not dare show his face ; and, before long, my child, you shall wear a ducal coronet. You start ! Think you that I will again consent to your marriage with a plebeian or foreign adventurer, of good lineage it is true, but one who has stood at the bar of justice with his own menials, for a crime for which they were executed, and he only saved by the favour of the judge—the hangman wasted his time on the hirelings, whilst the master spirit escaped. Where is the pride of the Percies ? Heavens save us ! the heiress of that noble race would touch the hand of one who has been tried as a felon ! Ah ! I begin to see now why this idea of Paris is uppermost. I would wager my best jewel, that Montague has again made you a marketable commodity, and, as in the former case, sold, or will sell, you to Konigsmark. Go to your chamber, child ; bid your lady read to you. I will desire preparation to be made for my journey, and will go this instant to my banker's."

Lady Algernon was alarmed ; she saw in her

granddaughter's manner the certainty that her young heart was occupied with the thoughts of Konigsmark, and that she had already fixed upon him as her husband, whilst Lady Algernon had opened a communication with the Duke of Somerset; she was quite aware of Montague's duplicity, and the Countess of Northumberland's weakness, and resolved to avoid Paris, and retire at once to Petworth. She gave directions for instant preparations for departure, and, ordering her chair, left her house to pay some formal visit.

Konigsmark, on gaining the street, re-considered the conversation which had passed, and resolved, like all bold, adventurous lovers, to strike the iron while hot. He soon gained intelligence of the habits of Lady Algernon, and planted his servant to watch the door. The doctor's disguise was still considered by him as safest, although young eyes are more often dazzled by appearances; and uniforms, like peacocks' feathers, may blind the eager to the worth of that beneath.

"Well," argued Konigsmark, "the very idea of gaining admission in disguise had something romantic—something beyond the usual formal visit, heralded by servants, and of common occurrence—here was love prompting a device that seldom fails with the young and the ardent."

No sooner was Lady Algernon safe, than Ko-



nigsmark returned. Aware of every turn of the female mind, he entered, certain of conquest, and resolved to hazard all upon the minute. He found Lady Ogle sitting before the fire, with her eyes fixed upon it.

"Idle," said Konigsmark to himself; "then I am sure of success."

"I have returned sooner than was my intention, on account of my being obliged to leave Amsterdam to visit a patient, at some distance from the city, and also (here he looked cautiously around the room,) to intimate to your ladyship, that by hazard, being called in to a patient lodged at the Grand Hostel, I met the Count Konigsmark; he was making diligent inquiries of the abode of Lady Algernon, and seemed in much anxiety. From the retired habits of your grandmother, none knew of the address, and I thought, before I would supply the intelligence, I would know how far it would be consonant with your ladyship's feelings to receive him, in order thus to place you on your guard should you wish to avoid him, and to give him the requisite information, should you wish to welcome him. Allow me, madam, once again to feel your pulse. It has rather increased, and it has not the hard beat of fever."

"Did he look in good health, doctor? I pray you be seated."



“With all the vivacity of youth and hope his face seemed flushed, his eyes animated, his manner eager. I have no doubt that he was in sound health.”

“And did he make frequent inquiries for our residence?”

“To one I heard him offer much money for the discovery of the abode; to another, he was lavish of his promises; to a third, violent for his return without success; and it seems to me that his only object in visiting Amsterdam was to discover your abode. It will be requisite, madam, that you take some effervescent draught, if the pulse continues so; I will order it, with your permission, and have it sent directly. My time, alas! is very short. Can I be the bearer of any message, or may I leave word with some of the servants of your abode? I would mention to your grandmother, as in all respects it is my duty to do so, that your ladyship must be kept quiet, and free from all excitement.”

“Lady Algernon is not at home, nor will she return for at least two hours; and if it be not a case which requires the doctor’s art, even at this moment I would pray you to grant me a few minutes’ conversation.”

Konigsmark drew his chair close to his patient, and was seated.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"Yours is a strange eventful history, Madam," said Konigsmark, as he again felt his patient's pulse; "at your early age, to be twice married."

"My will has never been consulted. I read that princesses accept the hands of others they have never seen, and thus was I betrothed by my step-father to Lord Ogle; and, on my side, the proposition was accepted by Lady Algernon. Before that event, I had seen Count Konigsmark."

"And of what character is this Count?"

"He has a European reputation for bravery; he delights in desperate deeds, fond of adventure, and withal he is kind and courteous; before my marriage, he recounted deeds of his life, which made my infant eyes refuse to sleep."

"A man of that stamp would not hesitate to

visit you in some disguise, or boldly invade the door in uniform."

"He may feel somewhat doubtful of his reception since Mr. Thynne's murder; but, if he knew how honestly I acquit him of all participation in that event, he would not fear to present himself."

"Nor does he! I am Count Konigsmark."

Lady Ogle started from her seat. Konigsmark clasped her hand, and, in all the gallantry of that age, fell upon one knee, and impressed kiss after kiss upon the prize he held. Lady Ogle did not attempt to withdraw it; but she seemed scanning with cautious eye the features, until she became reassured, and with childish innocence, smiled.

Now was it that Konigsmark poured forth the tide of gratitude and flattery. Now did he vehemently assert that, from the moment he had seen her at Petworth until this hour, she had been the star of his destiny; that she had won his heart by her elegance, her beauty, and her goodness. With rapidity he skimmed the leading events of his life, and in all and everything but one object engrossed his mind, and that was the hope of one day possessing his dearly loved Elizabeth.

It was the first time in her life that Lady Ogle had ever heard the serpent tongue of love, and now she felt the sweet poison coursing

through all her blood, her face flushing, her hand trembling, and her lips moving, though not with speech. Twice had she been married; in form, never had she been loved. Now, no cold admirer sought by the influence of others to win her heart; no mercenary bridegroom grasped her wealth, and relinquished her hand; no cold speculator wedded her gold, and left her to the care of a grandmother. Now, she was herself the idol sought. No danger or difficulty could offer opposition to her lover—his eyes were fire, his words burning with passion, his manner eager and tender.

The poor child listened, as her eyes swam in moisture; she, the plaything of two husbands, the idol of one so renowned! The thought that the world suspected the man of a murder, that he stood at the bar of justice, associated with those who were hung for the deed—the strong corroborative evidence, which fastened upon the Count the certainty of his being accessory before the fact—ah! if all this had been pleaded, in the strongest language of the most able advocate, not one word would Lady Ogle have believed. By her side, her hands clasped in his, his bold, untamed eye fixed upon hers, sat Konigsmark. Each word fell upon a willing ear, and all his assertions were believed, all his vows and promises credited. There was no one near to advise.



Lady Algernon was away, and the poor ladies, hired to read and sing, were regarded as mere automaton, beneath Lady Ogle in society, and, from their menial situation, improper persons for confidants.

What young heart could listen, and not be captivated? Where is the child who can distinguish between the warm assertion of words, and the true beating of the heart? The poor thing kept her eyes upon his, gazing with wonder and admiration upon the hero; her little frame trembled with unknown sensations, and in eagerness she answered every question asked with the warm affirmative. Having secured her heart, Konigsmark misdirected her mind.

"They report," he said, with a sneer, "I murdered Mr. Thynne. I could have killed him as being your husband, for I could not bear any man to stand between me and my object; but I am better known than to be suspected of cowardice. No; could I have met him in fair combat, each party attended by his friends, in the open field, with no advantage as to weapon, and no protection but in our skill and bravery, with Elizabeth as a reward for the conqueror, I would have hazarded this body, now sworn to be yours before a thousand Thynnes, and, trusting to my courage to win so rich a prize, I would have killed him a thousand times; but to assassi-



nate, to ride up to an unprotected, unsuspecting man, and basely shoot him without calling upon him to stand and account for himself, such thoughts never entered a Konigsmark's mind."

"Heaven is my witness," said the trembling girl, "that no thought so derogatory to your honour ever entered this heart. In vain has Lady Algernon tried to make me believe you guilty. Montague's letter, my mother's letter, convinced me you were innocent, and I can give no better proof of my belief than in my present situation."

"Turn we to other subjects more consonant to our minds. Thus much I may add, that he whose fame has stood so high as my own, is not likely to tarnish it by murder. Lady Algernon is old, and those well versed in human nature know how difficult it is to efface any picture from the minds of persons advanced in years. Age is slow to take impressions, but, once taken, they are difficult to be erased. I would stand high in the estimation of all. I would not have one reproachful look from the humblest. I would walk through this life, if it were possible, with my heart bare, and with every thought and deed engraven on it; and then you would see how true is the love, how sincere the faith, how warm the affection, with which I devote myself to you; but I must not waste these precious moments in idle words.

By this kiss, imprinted upon those darling lips, I swear to love you, and by the breath which murmurs back your belief, I feel our love is reciprocal. Henceforward, the Countess Konigsmark shall not be a child, kept in vile durance, watched over by prying eyes, treated as an infant, and amused as a baby. No ; by my good sword, and plighted love, the Countess Konigsmark shall walk amongst the highest of the earth, and add new lustre to her husband's fame by the beauty—the matchless, peerless beauty—which adorns the bride. Before we may be surprised again, dear, beautiful girl, assure me of your love."

"Indeed—indeed, Count——"

"Stop, dearest girl ; when love is once acknowledged, formality yields to affection. I would have you call me Charles, as I have already, in the glow of my ardour, called you Elizabeth."

"It seems so strange to me, Charles. I feel ashamed and afraid of calling you so. Do not, I pray you, think me impertinent ; the word comes already to my lips ; but bashfulness checks its utterance."

"The difficulty is overstepped the first time the name is pronounced. Once more, dearest Elizabeth, let me hear you say you love me."

"Indeed—indeed, Charles, I do."

Warm and rapid were the kisses the Count imprinted upon her lips ; whilst the child's cheeks

flushed with an unusual colour. He held her in his arms, and looked and gazed upon her eyes. He was an arch hypocrite; but it was like the net which held the lion, enclosing a spaniel. All this was new to Lady Ogle. Her mind had never been tarnished by fulsome declarations, and was spotless to receive any impression. To her uninformed mind, no hero ever equalled Charles John Von Konigsmark. She was unhappy at home, for age and youth seldom well assimilate. She panted for freedom, and her liberator was near.

“Listen to me, Elizabeth, with your best attention. It is reasonable to think that those who have sold you twice will sell you a third time. When I am away, every one will conspire against me. You will have this foolish murder, with ghosts, bleeding from a thousand wounds, painted to frighten you. You will hear wonderful things of me, all derogatory to my character; but remember, not one person will approach you who will be allowed to speak of me fairly—every expression will be laden with an object—nothing will be properly stated; my fame, therefore, stands in much danger.”

“I will not credit one word they say; they cannot control me now. I have given you my heart, and here is the hand ready to fulfil and ratify the vow.”

“ I count upon your devotion and your affection.”

“ You will not count in vain.”

“ In speaking of that nearest my heart, I omitted what is most requisite for you to know. The Grand Monarque asked me to command one of his regiments. I could not refuse so great an honour. He selected me to bear despatches to the Princess ———. I have to return to Paris in a given time, and to-night must leave Amsterdam; for three weeks is but a short time for making so long a journey. You are, I know, engaged to spend the spring and summer in Paris. Urge your grandmother to depart quickly for your stepfather's. Once there, our marriage is certain; to that point, my lovely angel, direct your constant view. I am well known to Montague, and there can present myself without fear of rebuke. My speed will be three times as great as yours, and by the time you are prepared to leave this city, I shall be on my return to Paris.”

The unusual time which Lady Ogle had devoted to her doctor aroused the vigilant spirit of the Cerberus who watched her, and her cautious manner enabled her to open the door of the salon unobserved. Believing Lady Ogle might be asleep, and the doctor long since departed, she had adopted this silent approach; but her sur-



prise was great on beholding the Count with his arm round the waist of Lady Ogle, supporting her on his knee, and imprinting kisses upon kisses on her lips; and there he murmured his vows of love and affection—detailed his plan—spoke of their future union—and received the bold assurance that no time or slander should turn her from her promise. The lady shut the door, and, as the miserable handle was released, it made a slight noise.

Konigsmark was in an instant the doctor.

“The handle of the door turned!” said the Count.

“Why are you alarmed, Charles? you see no one is in the room; it was but your fancy.”

“My fancy seldom deceives me. Hark! there is a noise upon the staircase! Sit you by the fire; I will be all respect, and as cold as a Dutchman. How your cheeks flush, Elizabeth! One kiss more, my own dear, fondly loved, promised bride.” It was more than one kiss he gave and received; vows of constancy passed rapidly between them; and not until the handle moved—and Konigsmark kept his eyes fixed on it—did he withdraw his lips. Lady Algernon entered in much state. Two servants stood at the door, and bowed as she passed; and Konigsmark, assuming the gravity of his profession, bowed also with much respect.



“As I am obliged suddenly to leave Amsterdam,” began the Count, “to visit a nobleman, whose situation is precarious, I ventured to re-visit my patient. There is a slight fever, nothing but what is common at Amsterdam, lurking about her. I would recommend your speedy departure—for your ladyship runs an equal hazard—and, without a sudden change, it may turn into ague. I have told Lady Ogle what course to pursue, and I hope she may honour me by following my advice.”

“You need not fear it, doctor; I am an obedient patient.”

The doctor bowed lowly. Lady Ogle, who was behind Lady Algernon, caught his eye as he raised his head; her face became crimson; nor did it lose its colour, when, at the last moment, one quick glance of the Count’s bright, piercing eye conveyed a fond adieu.

“It is strange,” said Lady Algernon, “but my poor memory assures me that I have seen that face before. Why, child, how you change colour! What is the matter?”

“Nothing, good grandmamma, but what the doctor said I should experience—a feverish flush one moment, and a shiver of ague the next. Pray God we may not both catch this cruel disorder, which clings to the sufferers for months.”

“All is in readiness; the sooner we leave this

land of dykes and ditches the better. I verily believe I feel the fever myself."

Lady Ogle, glad to depart, hastened to her own room, but she was never permitted to taste of the luxury of retirement; her companion was there, ready to read, to play, or to sing. Lady Ogle quite forgot her presence, and opened the window to catch the last look of her lover. He, who calculated all chances, had not left the street, but, from a distance, recognised the form, and waved his kerchief, which she returned. He then turned the corner, hastened to the hostel, and ten minutes afterwards was on board a vessel bound for the Morea.

"Lady Ogle," said the attendant, with a most unusual familiarity, "the cold air may somewhat, I hope, chill your convenient fever."

The young girl drew herself up, and, with an eye of astonishment, surveyed the hireling who dared to comment upon her indisposition.

"I can be as sincere a friend as I can be a determined enemy," remarked the attendant, who noticed this manifestation of pride. "I was in hopes my reading might have been useful to your ladyship. The mouse once assisted the lion, and the fox chopped the stork's head off."

"And pray, madam, what means this sudden recollection of fables? Do me the kindness to be seated, and, whilst my maid arranges my hair,

read to me. For that service, I believe, you are liberally rewarded." Stung to the heart by the cold rebuke, the companion rose, and curtseying with mock gravity, remarked, "her duty also extended to protecting Lady Ogle from the advances of the murderer of her late husband, even if he came disguised as a doctor." Willingly would Lady Ogle have unsaid her former remark; but the door opened, and her servant entered, whilst at the same time the companion left the room. This was the creature of Lady Algernon, who detested Lady Ogle from her heart. She could not bear restraint and rebuke from one so young; and Lady Ogle, in speaking to inferiors, had caught the manner of her grandmother, was harsh in her words, and had a certain superciliousness of behaviour which wounded the meek spirit of the menials. By Lady Algernon and Lady Ogle they were considered necessary evils, merely countenanced, because useful, but in no manner so placed as to warrant companionship or friendship. In leaving the room, she met Lady Algernon, who, in her pompous manner, desired that attention might be paid to Lady Ogle's wardrobe, and that preparations should be made for a speedy departure. "It is the only thing, my Lady, that can save her," replied the young lady.

“Has her fever increased, or a shivering fit come on? If so, dispatch some one for the doctor. Ah! I remember; he has left Amsterdam for some noble patient.”

“What doctor does your Ladyship allude to?”

Lady Algernon looked astonished, for she had never condescended to speak at such length to either of these companions, and certainly never countenanced so daring an insult as being asked a question. She sniffed with a certain disdain, as fashionable people may be seen to do who frequent, by accident, a church much resorted to by the poor, and without noticing the remark, walked on.

“The poor may sometimes be of service to the rich,” murmured the girl to herself; “we are made convenience by them, and why should not I turn them who spurn me to my own advantage, or to the gratification of my own revenge? If I tell this old fool of Konigsmark’s visit, I shall oblige her, and at once relieve Lady Ogle from the fears she must have of me. I shall then have done my worst, and be discharged; if, on the contrary, I keep the secret, Lady Ogle must humble herself to me—I know that will sting her proud heart to the quick—and Lady Algernon will continue to favour the very plan she most wishes to thwart. The red-haired Lady Ogle shall never be told by me again of the beauty of her



auburn locks ; that will mortify her more than my hasty revenge."

In the meantime, preparations were actively made for a departure, but the companion confined her care to her own wardrobe ; and, instead of the demure look, the patient attention, and devoted subjection, a careless, independent air was assumed, with a presumption marvellously acquired in so short a time. Lady Ogle saw she had compromised herself, firstly, in the deception she had practised in receiving Konigsmark as a doctor ; and, secondly, by maintaining, in her last words, the belief that he was such.

Lady Algernon, who seldom consulted the opinion of any, believing that wisdom always accompanied rank and distinction, and that the poor only merited the appellation of rogues and fools, formed her own plans in secret, and carried them out with patient perseverance. The preparations for departure being completed, she directed her course to the Hague, and from the Hague to Rotterdam. Lady Ogle was as ignorant of the various routes to Paris as a child ; but on arriving at Rotterdam, she began to have some suspicion that her grandmother meditated a flight to England.

"Come hither, child," Lady Algernon said ; "I have much of import to communicate to you."

Lady Ogle imagined all was betrayed.

“You flush, child! I pray the fever may have passed. Listen! of your two former marriages I disapproved—although Ogle’s was the least objectionable, on account of his rank. The immense wealth of all the Percies might claim a higher coronet; indeed, child, every one should seek to ascend the ladder of life—it is easy enough to slip down,—I have, therefore, ever since Thynne was shot—and the King’s interference has given some enviable eclat to that business, and the Duke of Monmouth’s attendance at the execution is not to be overlooked—I have laboured to find you a suitable husband: six weeks have now elapsed—your grief is but nominal; you should never redden your eyes for one who was so much below you in life—and I have, I think, procured you at last a most eligible match. Why start so?—any one might be proud of the connexion; and, by the Holy Cross, a prouder, or a man of nobler spirit does not exist than the Duke of Somerset. See, this letter contains the proposition; it is written to me; I told him that it would be received with a woman’s kindness.”

“But, my dear Lady Algernon,” stammered the child, “I would rather not be married—at least, to the Duke of Somerset.”

“If I had consulted you, Lady Ogle,” re-

plied the Dowager, in her usual manner, "I might not have been offended. You must have mistaken my words! I have accepted the Duke of Somerset as your husband, and merely inform you of the fact. We leave this place for England to-morrow; in six weeks, you will be a duchess."

"But, my dear grandmamma——"

"Take no thought about it, child; I have written—the business is concluded."

"Stay, good grandmamma, only for a moment. I thought we were going to Paris."

"Indeed, child! and perhaps thought you would there meet Count Konigsmark." The silent companion now feeling that in six weeks her occupation would be gone, made a most low and reverential curtsey, and with consummate gravity, said, "Lady Ogle saw him at Amsterdam."

"What is this?" said the old lady, rising; and, before Lady Ogle could possibly interfere to stop the mischief, the slave had emancipated herself, and with pointed bitterness said, "The Dutch doctor was Count Konigsmark. I saw Lady Ogle upon his knee, and his arm round her waist." All the furies could scarcely have equalled Lady Algernon's features; she apparently thought little of the disguise, and the manner she had been deceived, but that

the last of the Percies should sit upon a Swedish count's knee, and that the arm of a suspected murderer should encircle her waist, was beyond human endurance. She most carefully arranged herself for an elegant attitude, and with consummate grace fainted on a sofa; but before she committed this weakness, she feebly articulated, "The last of the Percies on a man's knee! the glory is departed from the house! I faint! I faint! The last of the Percies! the last of the Percies! a man's knee!—a man's knee!"

The next morning they sailed for England.



## CHAPTER XIX.

THE revenge of an insulted woman rankles until it is satisfied. That sex is patient under such sufferings, watching with caution until the moment arrives, and then, with unforgiving rancour, the bolt is shot.

The Countess of Northumberland led but a sorry life. Wrapt up in her husband—believing him the pride and ornament of every salon—envying every woman to whom he spoke—watching him in public, and for ever thinking of him in her solitude—she heard with dismay the chattering tongue of Scandal, which babbled of his many intrigues. Amongst the court party this was considered rather praiseworthy, and Montague not unfrequently was congratulated on his success, with much more sincerity than if had he achieved some general benefit for mankind; but in the heart of the Countess of Northumberland,

grief—deep, sincere grief—was making a fearful inroad. When Montague was present, her beautiful eye flashed with animation; and when, to lure him to his home, she used the most persuasive art of woman, she could not but read in her husband's countenance, that the evening passed in her society was considered so much of life lost—a sacrifice made to her request, not the gratification of his pleasure, or the result of his own inclination.

The Duchess of Cleveland had been fearfully insulted by the preference shown to her daughter by the Ambassador. She could not see her own waning charms—she could not imagine that the face which had captivated a monarch could yield to time, and fall beneath the unsparing hand of age. To find a rival in her own daughter moved the heart of this wretched woman to wreak her revenge first on the Ambassador, and secondly on his wife; for the Countess of Northumberland never would receive the Duchess of Cleveland on the footing of friendship, but made the formal curtesy of constrained acquaintance.

“I would see the Countess of Northumberland,” said the Duchess, as she spoke from her carriage, having driven into the huge court.

“The Ambassadors does not receive, since the death of her son-in-law.”

“It is of great consequence,” resumed the

Duchess, "and imports her much to know. It may save her inconvenience."

"I will duly report your Grace's words," replied the bedizened servant.

"And add," resumed the Duchess, "that my interview will be of short duration, as I am aware her Excellency's time will be much employed after my visit." There was a bitterness in the words, which was unheeded by the man, paid to convey a message or to return one.

"What is this?" said Brett to the man, he having watched the proceedings from a small kind of entresol window, which overlooked the court, and which was the place chosen by Colonel Brett to superintend the establishment.

"The Duchess wishes to see her Excellency."

"Quite impossible," said Brett, who was fearful that something might accidentally be hinted about Lady Ogle's visit to Paris, or Konigsmark's probable return. "Tell her Grace, that the Ambadress is particularly engaged; that she does not receive company to-day; that she is ill;—anything you like, only keep her out." But scarcely had Brett delivered himself of his words, when he heard his name from the Duchess, who, fixing upon him her beautiful dark eyes, which flashed with animation, remarked, "Pray, Colonel Brett, is the Duchess of Cleveland so little heeded by the Ambadress, that she is to be

sent away unheard, whilst some poor servant is made the bearer of a falsehood? Mention to her Excellency, if you please, that I am here, and *must* see her."

"I pray you," said Brett, somewhat frightened at the Duchess's manner, and knowing of the intrigue of Montague with both mother and daughter—"I pray you to be cautious of any hasty communication. Would not your Grace first see the Ambassador? I have no doubt his Excellency will be pleased with so amiable a visitor."

"Thank you, Colonel Brett, for the care you would take of my character, especially if the Countess of Northumberland should find me tête-à-tête with her husband. My business is with the Countess. I pray you, do not waste more time, which is precious to us all, but announce me."

Finding there was no way of removing the Duchess, Brett hastened to apprise the Countess, but he was followed close, and as he entered, the Duchess entered also.

The Countess of Northumberland, who had heard every rumour which scandal, with its thousand tongues, circulated and increased, rose in a most dignified manner, and curtsied lowly to the Duchess, remarking, "how con-



cerned she was that her Grace had not been properly announced."

The Duchess of Cleveland answered the curtsey with one of equal hauteur, and it was evident two fairer enemies never met in the field—the Countess of Northumberland strong in her innocence of life and purity of conscience, the other swelling with newly-acquired power and panting for revenge.

The Countess of Northumberland was never guilty of a rudeness—she was reserved before the woman known to intrigue with her husband, and suspected of having purposely sacrificed her daughter. Still she was a Duchess, received at the court, and acknowledged by society. She pointed to a chair, which Brett placed, and directly afterwards this worthy coadjutor left the room to inform the Ambassador of the coming storm.

"Your Excellency——" he began.

"What, Brett?—what is the matter? Is the Count off his bargain? Why, man, you look disconcerted and pale."

"Ten thousand times worse! The Duchess of Cleveland has forced her way into the saloon, and is now with the Countess. She would not be refused admittance, and, from her manner, was towering with pride and insolence."

“The devil!” muttered Montague; “there is but one thing to be done—a third person must be in the room. Go, Brett—go. I will come directly. Lead the conversation about the court, or any scandal your fertile brain can invent. Go, Brett—go!”

The usual formalities in expressions were scarcely finished between the Duchess and the Ambassadors, the former having begun by expressing her horror of Mr. Thynne’s murder, and condoled with the Ambassadors thereupon, before Brett returned, and, following up the theme, warmly condemned those who had endeavoured to fix the stain upon Count Konigsmark. This subject was particularly painful to the Countess, but Brett considered any pain preferable to a grand *éclaircissement* of the intrigues. He did his duty well, and Montague arrived apparently quite surprised to find the Duchess. He advanced with his usual courtesy of manner, but he was received with a stunning coldness.

“I am rather astonished, your Excellency, at your unusual kind manner,” said the Duchess.

“I scarcely anticipated so cordial a reception.”

“I marvel why you should expect any other,” replied the cool and wary Montague. “I trust in this house your Grace has ever been received as becomes your rank.”

“But the painful circumstances under which

we last met might render the present visit one more of form than friendship. I come, as is my duty, to take leave of her Excellency."

"It is, then, your Grace's intention to leave Paris?" said the Countess, her beautiful face lighting up with the expression of hope.

"Nothing is farther from my intention; but it is a duty I owe to his Majesty's Ambassadors, after her kindness, so manifestly shown to me on various occasions, to take a formal leave on her Excellency's retiring from her proud situation."

"Your Grace, I see, is inclined to mirth. Perhaps you have heard it whispered—and a whisper in Paris soon becomes a loud voice—that her Excellency intended meeting her daughter and Lady Algernon somewhere between Amsterdam and Paris? There is no truth in the rumour, although nothing would be more natural."

"I once really thought of so doing," remarked the Countess, "but my health has latterly been such, that quiet was recommended, and thus my intention was abandoned. I grieve much your Grace should have allowed your kind civility and attention to have thus disturbed your morning's avocation."

"My duty to the wife of the King's representative prompted me. I thought it better to apprize your Excellency as early as possible of your departure, and this morning I received a

letter from the King, expressive of his royal displeasure at the conduct of Mr. Montague, and his determination to appoint a more fitting representative. The letter, Mr. Montague, which Colonel Brett left in the portfolio for the Countess of Sussex, written in your handwriting, I forwarded to the King; in that letter he read that his own daughter had fallen to his own ambassador. Nay, sir! I pray you interrupt me not, for I am resolved to speak, and the Countess of Northumberland shall be undeceived in regard to yourself. The pursuit by night, when you endeavoured to gain my child's room, under my own roof, has also been made known to your sovereign. Nay, more—I will be frank with you; your opinion of his Majesty, revealed to me in divers conversations—his weakness as to the astrologer—the meeting at the house on the Versailles road—and every proof which could bring these charges home to you, are now in the King's possession. I learn that the new ambassador will arrive shortly, and I thought, rather than the Countess should receive the intelligence from a messenger, that it should come from the lips of one she had received so coldly and so formally, and that you, sir, should hear it from one you had insulted and betrayed. I wish your Excellency good-bye.” Here she curtseyed lowly, elegantly, and formally to the Countess, then,



turning to the Ambassador, she expressed a hope that his Majesty might overlook his transgressions, and that he might become penitent during his disgrace. Then, turning to Colonel Brett, she curtseyed in a dignified manner, and trusted he would find a better employment than conveying the love-letters of Mr. Montague. She then retired from the room. So astonished were all present, that not one had spoken a word.

No sooner had her Grace departed, than Brett sneaked out of the room. The Countess burst into a flood of tears, and Montague, who was of an excitable temper, paced like an enraged tiger in his cage. Often and often had Montague silenced his wife's reproaches by soothing her with soft words and sacred promises—now he stood undisguised. His monarch had his own note—the evidence was as clear as the sun at noonday—no subterfuge could avail him, no power could shelter him; and she who loved him with a woman's fondest affection, who had proved herself superior even to King Charles's seductive powers, who regarded her husband as a superior being, and who believed the many tales of scandal as mere court slander or gossip, now had the film removed from her eyes, and by the very person she had refused to countenance beyond the formal recognition of one admitted to the embassy—one whom she hated and despised

—but one who now had proved that her power was not lost over the man who raised her from plain Mrs. Palmer to the Duchess of Cleveland.

“I will not reproach you, Montague,” she began; “I grieve that in my own house I was not protected from the insolence of that bad woman. The communication is too true, and I must try all my interest to soothe the monarch’s anger. We may yet be very happy in retirement. Away from this sink of abomination and crime, you may yet learn the value of true love and affection.” Here she again burst into tears, during which Montague left the room to pour out his wrath in the presence of Brett.

“This is too bad, Brett!” he began. “Think you I have nothing to overcome, when deprived of this most enviable situation? My wife talks of the blessings of retirement, and the comforts of domestic love—As if Montague—the gay, aspiring Montague—could live in seclusion, find recreation in the planting of cabbages, or delight in the everlasting chirruping of sparrows.”

“Your Excellency——” began Brett.

“Hush! Brett, and do not grate my ears with a title I never shall know again. Rely upon it my successor will not be a week after the messenger. This is too good a place for any one to loiter who is appointed to it. Besides this, all hope of Konigsmark’s marriage is at an end, for he would

not dare show himself in England ; the whole fabric of my ambition is blown to the ground by the cursed breath of that profligate woman."

Brett could not resist the smile which the last words occasioned.

"You smile, Brett ! By my faith, I believe already my face has forgotten that charm—look forward, and see what awaits me—I would wager the King's jewel to the value of the vilest thimble on a sempstress's finger, that when I leave Paris, that incarnate devil of a Duchess will waylay our equipages, and salute us with a patronizing air ; or write a letter to the King, and bid me present it. If it were not the arrantest folly to commit suicide, and thus lose my chance of revenge, I should not care how soon I was buried. Ruined ! and by the very woman who had wheedled from me the secret of my sovereign's weakness—the astrologer ; and then my wife, the virtuous, beautiful Countess, she who received this vile woman merely to gain or preserve the good opinion of the King—to find the very worm she almost crushed turn out the most powerful and most poisonous of serpents !—What's to be done, Brett ? Why do you stand gazing at the window, as if some marvellous bird were to bring you intelligence to the contrary of that already received ; what's to be done, I say ?"



"For my own part," replied Brett, "I am resolved upon the most desperate of all ends—marriage."

"Marriage!" repeated Montague; "why man you must think our affairs more desperate than I do. Look you, Brett! I will forestal the King's intention—he shall not recal me—I will go without it. I will make a virtue of necessity, and resign; and, without waiting for a successor, leave Paris. Thus I will avoid the last insult of the Duchess; place the reason on the Countess's health—a wife is very often excessively useful as an excuse—draw up a resignation, dispatch it instantly, and, by the bright eyes of the Countess of Sussex, the ambitious Montague shall rise higher for this apparent fall. You, as the utmost desperation, fix on marriage—I will become a patriot. Write at once, Brett. I have turned the wheel of fortune before now, and soon the spoke now the lowest shall be the highest. Say nothing of my intentions; write the dispatch, and I will leave Paris within forty-eight hours."

"I presume your Excellency is already a convert to the Countess's opinion, and will retire to the country."

"No—no, Brett! I will yet arrange something with the Grand Monarque, which shall shake the power of any opposed to me. A patriot, Brett; rely upon it, no one is as popular as a patriot."



“For an hour or so, I believe it ; but afterwards some other bubble amuses the public, and then the first becomes the last.”

“It is because they know not when to leave the stage, and remain until they are hissed off. I must prepare the Countess for this journey ;—set you to work about the dispatch, and, as I told you, make the Countess’s health the pretext.”

“The King might think, from what he has heard, that your Excellency would rather rejoice at being freed from the surveillance of your wife.”

“And might know that I would not trust her in England, near the person of his Majesty, without a sufficient protection. I begin to rust from inactivity—this reverse of fortune has spurred me to a higher mettle ; and I mistake my powers and my influence, both at the French and English court, if I cannot rise superior to the misfortune. Firstly, I will keep back the King’s pension.”

“It will somewhat replace the sum already counted sure by the marriage of Lady Elizabeth.”

“Ah ! that is a hard blow ! The Swede would have paid high to have wiped out the supposed stain of murder by a marriage with the widow. He has, before this, seen her—he is no dangler—

no loiterer in the affair of love. A man who could plan the destruction of a husband will not be scared by the starch appearance of Lady Algernon. No! the very difficulty to be overcome will make him the more desperate in the attack.”

Montague soon persuaded his wife to make the preparations for her journey, and gladly did the Countess calculate the hours after which she should possess the undivided love of her husband—for this she would sacrifice anything—and, although now the frailties of the Ambassador could no longer be doubted—although, for the last year, his life had been one continued deceit—and although Montague had done all that a man could do to forfeit the esteem of his wife—yet did she love him most fondly; and, now again, for the fiftieth time, sued to him for forgiveness, accused herself of having neglected him, and strove, whenever the fit of ill-humour brooded over his countenance, to soothe him by her kindness. She was nature’s fairest model; she had resisted all attacks, from her own monarch to the frequenter of her salons; she had been admired, assailed, but never wavered in her love for Montague, and seemed to value life less than his love. Led by every reasoning of her husband, for she believed him the most talented of men, she had herself forwarded the

affair of the Countess of Sussex by the frequency of her invitations; and even the Duchess was somewhat more than commonly received at the instigation of Montague, and the arguments he adduced in order to retain his sovereign's confidence."

"It would be well, my dear!" said Montague, with a honeyed affection, "if we could leave without our departure being known."

"It will be difficult, I fear, my dear Montague, as you must take formal leave of the King."

"I can do that at the last moment. I can be hurried to England on important business—anything, rather than see again the revengeful glance of self-satisfied pride which blazed from that mushroom Duchess."

"And save me—save me, Montague, from the apparent innocent look of the Countess of Sussex. Our preparations need be very few; I can leave my servant here to act under Colonel Brett's direction; and I fear not to say, that I shall leave this grave of my happiness with less regret, since I leave that man behind me."

"You misjudge Brett, my dear; indeed you do. He acts but under authority."

"The words of the Duchess are still sounding in my ears, 'Do you, Colonel Brett, find a better employment than conveying the love-letters of *Mr.*

Montague.' Let us not talk of him : enough for me, that I leave behind me all I most despise and hate, to journey with my husband. Come, come, Montague, cheer up a little ; you shall hear no word of reproach from me ; had I been kinder, or gayer—had I taken part in the court amusements, instead of shutting myself up like a state prisoner—had I been more of a companion, and conformed more to the manners and customs of this metropolis, you would not have been driven to the society of those, who, after you had upheld them, have turned to work your downfall."

It was thus this excellent woman, who had received so severe a shock from the discovery of Montague's intrigue with both the parent and the child, that she gradually sunk under it, turned all her attentions to her worthless husband, and endeavoured by every means to soothe his fretful humours. She was not destined long to be his partner, and the idea which most tended to hasten her death was, that her husband would not long grieve over her loss ; in short, she felt that her forgiveness was rather more hateful than if she had loudly proclaimed his infamy.

Within three days, Montague and the Countess left Paris. The Duchess of Cleveland was not to be balked of her revenge ; she had bribed the porter, ascertained the hour of the departure,



and, as the carriage of the Countess drove up the Boulevards, and turned towards the Barriere St. Denis, she drove up to it, and desired the Countess to present her compliments to the King, and to assure him that she had only omitted to write, because she was well aware his Majesty's late Ambassador would not scruple to open her letters, as he had invariably done all she had entrusted to his care.

## CHAPTER XX.

ISABELLA and her father had travelled for several months, and were now staying at —, near the seat of war in Greece, which was attracting many distinguished persons, either as adventurers or spectators. The wealth of the Count had procured him a favourable reception everywhere, and the beauty of his daughter had attracted universal admiration; but he had not left Italy without catching the breath of a thousand reports about the discovery of his child, and many parts of her early life. This had determined him, for her sake, to leave his country until curiosity should be satiated and scandal satisfied.

It was his intention to place his daughter, if possible, about the person of some royal princess, to return to Italy without her, and, after a lapse of some time, to recall her from a palace, which would silence all remarks and hints that were

for ever mingled with the name of Vergani the smuggler.

The Princess ——— was the centre of attraction in the pretty town in which she was staying. Her husband held a high command in the army, and his wife was one of those high-born beauties, who, at the period we are illustrating, were remarkable for their gallantries. At a party given by the Princess, Isabella had been presented. The striking beauty of the latter won her many admirers; she was exactly the contrary to the Princess, and yet both were pre-eminently beautiful. The dark flashing fiery eyes of Isabella, her beautifully chiselled features, resembling a living cameo, her elegant figure, her animated expressive manner, were all in contradistinction to the fair-haired, blue-eyed meek, modest-looking Princess; and in an instant the latter seemed much prepossessed in favour of the Italian, whose father the Princess condescended to notice in a marked and favoured manner. Isabella's bashful behaviour attracted also the observation of the Princess. She answered all questions with a timid modesty—the result of a conscious inferiority. It was her first appearance at a regal party, and, moreover, she could not divest herself of the belief that she was a marked object in the society; she attributed to the probable circulation of the wonderful events of her early life

that observation which she would have avoided, and never once imagined that her transcendent beauty could have occasioned the disagreeable notice to which she was subjected.

In her mind and in her memory was only one deeply engraven image—that of Konigsmark. In vain had she endeavoured to discover his abode. No tidings had ever reached her ears of the perfidious lover, who risked his life in the sea rather than continue by the side of her who fondly, deeply adored him. Isabella had endeavoured to conceal from herself the true cause of his desertion ; she only remembered the vigilance used through Konigsmark's means to restore her to her family. She sat in that crowded ball-room the admiration of every one present, but her heart was far away. Her memory had a thousand times recalled the desperate bull-fight, and she wondered at her own conduct when she courageously thrust the dagger in the brute's heart, and rescued her lover from death. It was a strange event ; but she never had laid aside the weapon which had preserved him,—it was a gift from his own hand, bought at Madrid,—and every night when she laid her head on her pillow she kissed the blade with as much sincerity as a good Catholic would kiss a relic. She was unconscious to all around her, when suddenly she overheard an officer who, in a hasty commu-



nication with the Princess, mentioned the name of Konigsmark. Her eye brightened into flame, her ears stood out like those of a dog when a strange footfall strikes upon his ear, and she overheard the following :—

“ He is sent by the Grand Monarque, and desires an interview, at your Highness’s leisure.”

“ The purport of this message ?”

“ I am uninformed, your Highness. I believe it is a sealed communication, to be delivered into your own hand.”

“ Bid him a hearty welcome, and, if not over-fatigued, say we shall be pleased with his company here. If, however, he would rather repose, see that he be well provided with all requisite comforts, and give orders that he be liberally supplied. I dedicate this night to the amusement of those around me ; let to-morrow, at noon, be fixed for his audience.”

The Chamberlain bowed and retired.

The Princess then turned towards Isabella, and took a seat by her side. She immediately rose.

“ Be seated, Mademoiselle. I have a communication to make to you, which might materially alter your future life. You are young—of my own age ; lively, I am sure, although apparently melancholy, even in this gay scene. That is occasioned merely by your not having found many acquaintances, although, to judge by the looks of

those around, you have won many hearts. Why have you not danced?"

"I am but indifferently instructed in that art," Isabella replied, "and in the presence of so much grace and beauty I fear to be awkward." Although etiquette would have desired the Italian to listen with attention to her Highness, her eyes were turned to the door through which the Chamberlain had passed; it was attributed to modesty.

"I have spoken with your father, who mentions his intentions of visiting many towns in our vicinity before his return to Italy. I have asked him to allow you to remain attached to my household until his return, and I trust the invitation will not be refused by you."

A sudden flush covered the cheeks of the Italian. It was her heart's wish to remain. She had caught enough of the Chamberlain's communication to believe that Konigsmark was near; and the Princess might have observed an eagerness to accept the invitation, which the most modest would have hesitated to answer, but would have bowed in assent, whilst they acknowledged the honour conferred upon them.

"Then I shall mention to your father that we have arranged this matter. A crowded court, with all its amusements, is more alluring than galleries of old Dutch paintings; and I dare

affirm the living picture is as welcome to you as the dull, brown, heavy, starched appearance of an old burgomaster on canvass."

The Princess made her remarks, with all the tone of a friend, in a gay communicative manner, and scarcely heeded the look of disappointment when the Chamberlain returned to the room without the visitor.

"The Count, your Highness, has availed himself of your permission to retire to rest. He has ridden hard since he left Versailles, and appears much fatigued."

"My Lord Chamberlain, my young friend here, who becomes attached to our court, has not danced to-night. I pray you select her a partner worthy of her beauty."

"Your Highness imposes a most difficult task. I scarcely believe it possible to obey the order."

The Princess smiled, Isabella blushed, and the Chamberlain gave a melting look indicative of the palpitation of his own heart.

"I pray your Highness to excuse me," said Isabella; "I would not disgrace your court by showing how awkward a lady it has been your highness's misfortune to select; besides, I have never learned this dance, and am ignorant of its measure."

"This modesty," replied the Princess, "is

misplaced ; but we allow you the privilege of the stranger for to-night. I will give orders for your reception to-morrow, and by noon I shall expect you."

The Princess rose, and left Isabella grateful for her release ; but the place was soon occupied by her father, who a thousand times congratulated her on the good fortune which attended her, and poured into the inattentive ear of his daughter lessons of court etiquette, the manner of addressing the Princess, and gave a careful warning to avoid exciting her Royal Highness's envy or jealousy. " She is of a light disposition," continued the Count, " and has a certain levity of look which even royalty cannot conceal. Human nature speaks out in spite of her restraint. Now, it is possible that your eyes may attract the person on whom hers are fixed—beware of that ; and also be careful never to see what it is wished you should not see. A person attached to a court should be deaf, dumb, and blind, excepting when required by the highest personage to listen, talk, and see. On such occasions, the sorrowful heart must feign a smile, and the low in spirits assume a vivacity of expression. A royal personage lives in an atmosphere of flattery—the freshening breeze of truth never disturbs the air—all who walk around the shrine are living specimens of accomplished deceit—to speak



an unpalatable truth is to hazard an enviable situation. You require this warning—you are entering on a new career. Henceforth you must see with the eyes of the Princess, and frame every answer in accordance with the wish of the questioner; the habit is soon learned. Deceit in a court is as requisite as decent and becoming garments; and when even advice is tendered it is wrapped in a garb of flattery, as children take bitter medicines in sweet jellies. Above all, take care of your heart, and fortify it against all attacks, by not crediting one word which courtiers address to you."

"My heart is quite safe," replied Isabella; "I do not fear its wavering. I am tired, dear father, of this scene of amusement, to which I am so little accustomed. Let me beg of you to return home."

A night of feverish agitation was passed by Isabella. The deeply engraven figure of Konigsmark seemed more idelibly impressed upon her heart—he was the only man she had ever loved. She had seen him hailed as a victor, and courted as a champion, and these have charms for women. If, as Johnson says, "a nobleman comes as an author, ready booted and spurred," so does a hero into the arena of love, cased in armour and sure of conquest. Isabella had never heard one rumour against his character—she had never seen

this idol of her heart standing at the bar of justice, branded with all the suspicion of being a murderer, and, although acquitted, known to have been guilty. Now the brightest hope of her life might be realized—she was an heiress of great wealth—of high family—acknowledged by all, and admired by thousands; and in a few hours she should see him again, and claim from him the ten thousand promises he had made. To sleep was impossible—hers was a waking dream of future happiness, of redoubled love and affection.

In the mean time, Konigsmark had inquired of those around him concerning the Princess ——; and very far from thinking of Isabella, his thoughts recurred only to the star of his destiny; she had desired him to perform his mission, and then her hand should be his.

With more than usual care Konigsmark dressed himself for the interview: the Princess was young, and first impressions are seldom entirely erased; his fame was European—his guilt confined alone to England—the very circumstance of his serving in the French army, and of being entrusted with a special mission from Louis XIV., was a guarantee for his respectability; all the good he had done was acknowledged—the crime was discredited.

“I am desired,” said the Count, as he bowed

lowly to the Princess, "to place this communication into your Highness's hand;" he raised his eyes respectfully, and caught the glance of those of the Princess —; there was a strange expression in them, and a slight flush suffused her cheeks; — she was pleased to say, "That his Majesty of France could not have sent a more welcome messenger, or one to whom Christianity in general was more indebted."

"I am desired to await your Highness's orders, and to return to France with the answer to that dispatch."

"The fatigue you have undergone will make some trifling rest requisite." During the conversation which ensued, Konigsmark was aware of secret kindness in each expression; and there was also a melting softness in the eyes, which seemed to speak a tender heart and kind disposition. Konigsmark's look was that of a brave and resolute man, and yet, so well managed, that he appeared to shrink, as if dazzled by the glance of the Princess: he was an adept—it was the merest acting—for the Swede never felt any emotion of the heart, which was as insensible to fear as to love; but he knew well when another felt the secret trembling of dismay, or the tender vibration of affection.

"I fear," said the Princess, "it will be some time before I can prepare the answer to this dis-

patch. Did his Majesty appear very anxious for your return?"

"I was desired to wait your Highness's pleasure."

"Some days must elapse before your return to France; you are, therefore, master of your time for at least a week; your abode is at your pleasure in this palace. My Lord Chamberlain, see that the Count Konigsmark wants for nothing."

The Count made a very low bow, and again, on raising his head, observed the fixed glance of the Princess.

He was not long in discovering that Isabella was in the same house, and their joy at meeting each other appeared to be mutual.

"Can it be," said Konigsmark, as he pressed Isabella to his heart, "that again I hold you in my arms, and imprint this kiss upon your lips? You thought it cruel, my angel, that I should have left you at Barcelona, and no doubt imagined ten thousand infidelities. I knew that Vergani could restore you to your parent; had I been with you, my love would have prevented such a desirable end, for then I could not have left you, and my presence would have marred your reputation. It was a powerful struggle between love and duty, and I am now well pleased that the latter prevailed."

Isabella believed every word—she would have



believed him had he declared himself capable of carrying the sun in his left hand. Let but a woman love, and she is as blind to any truth, which is detrimental to her lover's character, as she is credulous of any favourable report.

"And now, dear Charles, how long am I to wait before I am your wife?"

"Ah, that is a question which, if my good intention and impatience could answer, would be easily resolved—this hour; but, alas! my sweetest spoilt pet child, there are difficulties even to lovers and heroes to be surmounted! You are a Catholic—I, a Protestant; the Pope might overcome his repugnance to this alliance, in consideration of my former services; but it will require time, and we must endeavour to obtain much influence before we approach his Holiness."

"I have no religion, but your religion—no love, but your love; the man who is to guide me through life shall instruct me in my prayers. I will have no priest but the one enshrined in my heart. I am ready to be your wife, here is my hand. I fear no Pope or anathema of excommunication, but from you."

"Nor I, Isabella!—I fear no Pope; but how are we to find a man to read over the ceremony? A Protestant would not unite me to a

Catholic ; and a Catholic dare not unite you to a Protestant."

"It is an evasion, Charles. I am no Catholic."

"Did not your father take you to the church? Did not he force you to the confessional?"

"At that confession I accused myself of nothing, but of my deep, unalterable love for you."

"And how many aves were you condemned to say?"

"I threw the bauble of beads from me, and repeated your words when we sat on the deck of the felucca, and before the wind disturbed our nuptial bed."

"We will see about the marriage instantly," said Konigsmark. "I will mention it to the Princess, and get her to interest herself in our union ; but it is almost a pity such romantic love should close in a marriage." He left the room, but the last words were not hastily forgotten.

"Relate to me," said the Princess — to Konigsmark, "some of the stirring scenes of your life. For one so young, you have seen much ; and the world is loud concerning your adventures."

The Count and the Princess were alone in the

small boudoir, which was forbidden to all but those specially invited ; here the ladies of the court never entered ; from it was the sleeping-chamber of the Princess. History has made mention of secret trap-doors beneath these apartments, and has also unfolded some of the dark scenes which were enacted in those apparently luxurious rooms. The very circumstance of the Princess —— being alone with Konigsmark, must convince the reader that again had the Swede triumphed—that another victim had been added to the long list of his conquests.

Konigsmark would gladly have obtained Isabella's removal, but the excessive jealousy of the Princess deterred him from ever mentioning her name, for her beauty had obtained the voice of a thousand tongues, and her affability and modesty had obtained her many friends. She favoured none, but was civil and courteous to all. Had Konigsmark attempted to interest himself in her removal, or in anything conducive to her welfare, the Princess's jealousy would have been aroused ; and she, under the appearance of mildness and meekness, was revengeful and cruel.

Konigsmark was now her favourite ; he passed hours with her, under the pretence of assisting her in her private dispatch to the King ; and Isabella watched, with an aching heart, for the few minutes devoted to her, which every day

grew less and less, and which sometimes betrayed a haste and capriciousness of temper never before manifested. She never could attribute this to anything but the press of business—she would not believe his affections changed—she made ten thousand excuses ; but she felt only as a confiding woman, awakened to suspicion, can feel ; still she was consoled, for every minute which Konigsmark devoted to her was spent by the wary Swede in expressions of love.

“The promises of Konigsmark are always sacred,” said the Count, to Isabella, as she again mentioned the marriage.

“And the delay is ever the same,” replied Isabella. “I would not upbraid you, but how can I see your attention to the Princess, and remark the speaking communication of the eyes without suspicion ? It is because I believe you above all other men in daring, that I fear your constancy ; and I could forgive the woman—for that would somewhat palliate my crime—who won you to her heart. I could never pardon you for the infidelity to myself.”

“Beautiful Isabella,” said Konigsmark, “look at that mirror, and tell me what other beauty could supplant you.”

“We never cherish what we possess, so much as that which is withheld from us, else, why are your hours devoted to another, when I await



with anxiety your arrival, and bless you when you come ?”

“Ever—ever suspicious, Isabella !”

“Have I not cause, Charles ? When you come to me, it seems a moment wrung from another, rather than devoted to myself. Look, Charles, at this ! I wear it ever by my side : it saved your life, and will, perhaps, rid you of mine ; but it shall rid me of a rival, before it shall be warmed in my own heart.”

“Put up that poniard, Isabella. What would the Princess say, if she saw you with that weapon ?”

“She would say, that no pious man worshipped a relic with half the fervency and devotion which I pay to this dagger, that saved your life. Now, let me but retain your love, and the devotion is a million-fold increased.”

“And you love me now more than ever ?”

“Ten thousand times ! I loved you at first, for your kindness in rescuing me from the Turks, and afterwards from Vratz. Ah, how pale you are !”

“It is nothing ! Continue, dearest, to tell me of that most in accordance with my wishes.”

“I loved you afterwards for yourself ; your brave deeds made you an idol which I worshipped, nor has my devotion decreased ; I love you with all the passion of an Italian.” Ko-

nigsmark raised his eyes, and saw the Princess at the door, she had overheard every sentence ; and, fearful lest the words of the dark-eyed Italian should win back the heart she imagined devoted to herself, entered the room. There was an air of haughty disdain, and, after glancing with a look of hatred at Isabella, she coolly said, "Count Konigsmark, you will leave here to-morrow morning for Paris ; in one hour attend me in my boudoir for your secret instructions. I have some occupation for you," she continued, addressing Isabella, "which will occupy your time until your father's return. I marvel that he left one so unprotected in such dangerous company." Isabella rose, and followed her.

"Ah !" sighed Konigsmark, "when will my evil genius leave me !" He started as he imagined he felt a pressure from the ring. The Princess is jealous. Isabella is jealous, and the star of my destiny, perhaps, disgusted with my absence, is forming a new marriage ; but to-morrow I shall be free from all trammels. How strange it is that, whenever I put my hands in my pockets, this prophecy of Vratz's comes forth. I can have little to fear now, since she to whom it obviously alludes is far away."

It was midnight. From ten o'clock had the Count been entertained in the secret boudoir of

the Princess. Here no human voice penetrated, —no eye could see—no ear be gratified, excepting those within its precincts. It was a room dedicated to love. Here the warm whispers fell on ready ears. Here the quick lightning of the eye conveyed the expression which the tongue might have faltered in uttering, and here were spread those luxuries which heat the blood and inspire confidence.

From the moment that Isabella had been dismissed, she became aware of the fatal rivalry of the Princess. With anxious step she traversed the long corridor which separated the boudoir from the other apartments. The page on duty left his post, in order to gratify his companions with the assurance that they had time for amusement, as the Count was with her highness, and orders had been given for no one to be allowed to enter. Isabella softly crept to the door, and then, ashamed of playing the spy, retreated to the nearer pillar, behind which she waited, resolved to see Konigsmark before his departure, and once again declare her unbounded love. One o'clock resounded through the long hall, and then there came all the solemn silence of the night. The moon shone through the painted glass, giving a curious and kind of church-like melancholy to the scene. Two o'clock, and the door of the

boudoir opened. The Princess looked along the corridor, whilst Isabella, concealed behind the pillar, felt her heart beat strangely.

“There is no one, dearest Charles,” she said, “and now one—one long kiss before we part. Your return will be within a fortnight. The King must answer the letter, and you will be the bearer; in the mean time, no other person shall be here to mar our pleasures.” The Princess left the door open, and returned to take the last parting from the object of her affection. She threw her arms around him, and clasped him, weeping, to her heart. “I do not ask you to use despatch,” she said, “I am too well convinced of the ardour of your love. How long—how very long it will be before we meet again!”

“I will not loiter on the road. With such a Princess for my ruler, and such a sovereign of my heart, I cannot long delay my return to the only object of my love.”

“You loved the Italian, Charles?”

“Never—never! She was a woman chance threw in my way—one sufficiently enticing to be a companion of some leisure hours, and one who, having fallen, would regain her position by a marriage. The kindness due to a handsome woman, she has experienced; but love—such as I feel for you—devotion, affection, all that engrosses the human heart, and makes life a day of joy,



she never had from me. With you, I treasure every moment; with her, it is a lingering hour, which seems like a sun-setting shadow, fifty times longer than the substance."

"Then I may rest assured that no other shares your love?"

"I swear by those dear blue eyes, now moistening in tears, no other shall ever share my love!"

Konigsmark encircled her in his arms, and, when he impressed his last warm kiss upon her lips, Isabella approached him as he raised his head from the embrace. The Princess saw the intruder—she shrieked. Konigsmark turned suddenly, clasp- ing his sword, and fell a corpse

at the feet of the Princess. He lingered sufficiently long to hear—"The dagger which saved has reached the perfidious heart; the hand which was degraded has taken its own revenge; and now, whilst the craven-hearted Princess has fainted, I will kiss those cold lips, and seize that which never left the hand." She fell upon the corpse and imprinted a thousand kisses, when, seeing the Princess move, she seized his hand in order to withdraw the iron ring—it was gone.

THE END.

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